

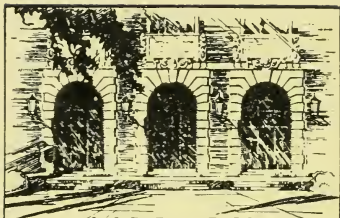


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Joseph Leigh?





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THE
BANDIT'S BRIDE;

OR,
THE MAID OF SAXONY.

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF MONTERASIL ABBEY, &c.

Thou hast torn me
From the dear arms of my lamenting friends,
From my soul's peace, and from my injur'd love,
* * * * *
And driv'n me to the brink of black despair.
ROWE.

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THE

BANDIT'S BRIDE.

CHAP. I.

WE will now return to the period when Rosalthe, to take her farewell of the rock, rambled from the cottage, her thoughts resting on Dresden, and the image of the too fascinating Adelbert rising to her imagination. She thought of past happiness as of a pleasing dream, whose shadow, flitting at the approach of morning, "leaves not a wreck behind." She thought of the inflexibility of the Baron—her own mys-

terious fate—of the castle—the convent—the cottage; but ever and anon, like the shipwrecked mariner, encouraging the deceiver Hope, and clinging to the floating reef of his foundered vessel, she thought of Adelbert's affection, and the gay scenes of future bliss decked by his sanguine fancy.

The rich tints which the setting sun reflected on the prospect, called forth her admiration; she gazed on the last expiring ray, as it sunk beneath the horizon, and soon beheld its glorious splendor shadow into gloom. Turning from the wild sublimity of stupendous mountains, and uncultivated forests, she beheld the wide extending waves of the Baltic, now rising in awful swell, now dashing their white topped heads against the base of the rock. The sound of the water dying in monotonous roar, and the discordant shriek of the sea-mew, filled her with an emotion bordering on fear: she prepared to depart,
for

for the moon's pale beams, now and then breaking from behind the dark gathering clouds, played on the ocean, and with fantastic forms chequered the deep gloom of the woods. Scarce had she reached the declivity, when a shrill sound encreased her alarm: the admonitory caution of Father Anselmo darted athwart her brain, and, with a beating heart, she quickened her pace; but, ere she had gained the plain, the shadow of a man crossed the path: terror redoubled her speed—scarce daring to breathe, she fled swiftly towards the cottage.

“ ’Tis her we seek—by her beauty it is Rosalthe,” exclaimed a voice; and, in an instant, her flight was impeded by the rude grasp of a man, who, seizing her arm, endeavoured to force her from the path.

Uttering a loud shriek, she struggled to free herself; but vain were her efforts—vain were her entreaties—like the tender

lamb trembling in the clutches of the ravenous wolf, her prayers for pity were disregarded, and the tears of innocence could not thaw the frigidity of nature.

“Whither would you take me?” she enquired in faltering accents. “Ah, spare me, Heaven! What will become of my distracted parents?”

“Your parents are poor,” replied the man, “and it is not fair that such youth and beauty should be hid from the world: as yet you have not learned the pleasures of existence—confined with decrepitude and age, and to the cheerless society of religious fanatics, love has not warmed your heart, or pointed your wishes. But now a better fate awaits you: I lead you to a being, tender, engaging, handsome—a being who has long loved, has long glowed to express his admiration—a being who, henceforth, beneath your smiles, will forget the misery your absence has created.”

Rosalthe

Rosalthe shuddered, and, breathing a supplication, raised her streaming eyes to Heaven. The rain began to fall, and the black and heavy clouds, sailing over head, threatened an approaching storm. The man, anxious for the safety of his prisoner, threw a large cloak around her; and, calling aloud the name of Otho, was joined by a wretch, whose appearance was even more ferocious.

Gigantic was his stature, and each feature was marked with savage barbarity—revenge sat upon his forehead—villain was imprinted on his countenance: his eyes, small, dark, penetrating, scowling beneath a pair of shaggy brows, sparkled with ill-concealed joy, as he gazed upon the trembling form of the hapless Rosalthe —“Ours is a glorious prize, Cuthbert,” he exclaimed; “a jewel worthy to grace the diadem of an empire. What will our chief, what will the gallant Hildebrand say, when we present our offering?”

“Would I was Hildebrand!” interrupted Cuthbert; “for if ever his station of honour was enviable, it is in this new, this valuable acquisition.”

Rosalthe here ventured to gaze upon the speaker. His dress was a kind of uniform; a broad-sword hung at his side; his waist, girt round with a leathern girdle, contained fire-arms and ammunition; a scarlet cloak flowed from his shoulders; and his head was guarded by a kind of helmet. She turned away her eyes with unutterable anguish, and proceeded silently between them. Insensibility would have been happiness to the horror of her situation—she knew not whither they were conveying her, or into whose power she had fallen. From their appearance she had every thing to dread; for as well might she have sought for roses on the snow-topped heads of the mountain—as well might she have sought for ice on the sun-scorched plains of summer, as mercy from the hearts of her obdurate

rate guards. She looked mournfully towards her beloved cottage—she sighed the name of Dusseldorf—the name of Adelbert; but no friend, no lover came to her rescue. Night drew in, and the long threatening clouds rolled awfully overhead. They had long since quitted the path, and were now buried in the almost impenetrable wilds of the forest—no moon lent her chaste rays—no stars glittered in the wide expanse of firmament—all was darkness—all was silence and despair: an undescrivable dread crept through her heart, and she clung for protection, even to the wretches who had thus torn her from her foster-parents.

“Why dost thou tremble, fair one?” said Otho. “Fear not, for this well-tempered weapon,” pointing to his sword, “shall protect thee.”

Whilst yet he spoke, a vivid flash of lightning darted across his countenance;

and a succeeding peal of thunder seemed to shake the earth to its foundation. Rosalthe shrieked, and hid her face in her hands.

“Courage!” exclaimed Cuthbert, nearly raising her in his arms. “Soon will your fears terminate; Hildebrand will soothe to peace your palpitating heart, and teach you to bless the day which disclosed your blooming beauty to his view.”

“The night, thou meanest,” returned Otho, “for the sun had long set when I met him in the forest. ‘Otho,’ he exclaimed, grasping my arm, ‘until this hour I fancied myself happy in sharing the dangers of my brave associates; but I now acknowledge a tie even stronger—a tie which, in the faultless person of a lovely cottager, baffles all my boasted indifference, and convinces me, that without the tender confidence of love, bliss was not made for man.’ I laughed at the heroic strain of our chief, and hinted glory; but
interrupting

interrupting me with unusual gravity—
‘Talk not to me of glory,’ he continued,
*‘I tell thee love absorbs every faculty—she
saw me not, but I traced her steps, and
marked the dwelling which contains perfec-
tion.’* But see, our cavern is at hand—
banish these vain terrors, captivating Ro-
salthe, and meet thy devoted lover with
the smile of welcome.”

Rosalthe answered not—she raised her
tearful eyes to Heaven, and hung almost
motionless on the arm of Cuthbert.

The loud roaring of the mountainous
billows now broke upon the silence of
night—tremendous was the scene—the
thunder rolled in distance—the angry
waves, dashing against the shore, threw the
white surf high in air—whilst the light-
ning’s blue flames, like liquid fire, danced
upon the ocean. They had left the forest
far behind, and now by a narrow path
wound round the cliff. At length they
B 5 paused:

paused: Otho, stooping down, thrust his arm into the hollow of the rock; and drawing forth a horn, sounded it; a shrill noise succeeded from beneath the spot on which they stood, and immediately after a square stone opened, and disclosed a flight of steps. Rosalthe started back, but Cuthbert smiled, and, forcing her forward, they descended. Passing through a long passage hewn out of the solid rock, they entered an extensive cavern by which it was terminated, and beheld, by the strong glare of torch-light, several men seated round a fire.

“Success, noble Hildebrand!” vociferated Otho, forcibly conducting the terrified Rosalthe to the chief, in whom she recognized the handsome stranger, who at the rock enquired his road to the hamlet.

Hildebrand sprung from his chair, and, seizing her hand, endeavoured, whilst his expressive features glowed with rapture,
to

to welcome her to the cavern. But Rosalthe, overcome with fear and horror, heard not the expressions of admiration which her beauty excited; she fixed her eyes in supplicating earnestness on the Bandit, and sunk, deprived of motion, at his feet.

On returning to life, she found herself in an inner cavern, separated from the former by the projection of the rock, supported by the chief, on whose bosom her head reclined. An elderly woman, and one of the troop, who officiated as surgeon, stood near them. Struggling to free herself, she started from his arms, and, clinging to the woman, tottered a few paces, and fell through weakness on her shoulder. Hildebrand read in her manner the agitation which his presence occasioned, and with an impressive order retired, leaving her to the care of Wilhelm, who, taking her hand, addressed her in a voice of tender commiseration. Surprised,

she looked anxiously towards him, and beheld pity and sympathy blended in his countenance. His features agreed not with his occupation—they were rough from habit, but humanity marked the outline. An inward impulse drew her towards him; her heart clung to his protection, and already acknowledged him her friend.

Bianca now rose to quit the apartment—unacquainted with the fearful sensitive emotions of modesty, she fancied the agitation of Rosalthe proceeded from fatigue and long fasting; to obviate which, she went in search of wine and bread, which, with a night's repose, she thought would restore health and quiet to the hapless prisoner. Wilhelm lingered behind, and, as Bianca closed the door of the chamber, whispered in soothing accents—"You have a friend, beautiful Rosalthe, even in this cavern—a friend who pities your misfortunes, and with his life will defend you from insult."

She

She was unable to reply—her heart was too full for utterance—with tears alone could she thank him: he read her emotion, and, still continuing to gaze upon her, again would have spoken, but the return of Bianca closed his lips.

“Hildebrand awaits you,” said the old woman—“he is anxious for the health of the lady.”

Wilhelm bowed, and joined the Bandit in the outer cavern. Complying with the request of Bianca, Rosalthe swallowed some of the cordial she had brought, and then threw herself on a bed. But sleep weighed not down her eyelids—alas! fatigue could not for a short interim subdue the keenness of reflection. She thought of Dusseldorf and Agatha’s anguish when the night saw not her return to the cottage—she thought of the Abbess, on hearing the tale of her disappearance: but if her tears flowed at the idea of the sufferings of her friends,
what

what did not her heart experience, when imagination pourtrayed the distraction of her lover!—"Dearest, beloved Adelbert!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands in the bitterness of agony, "how wilt thou support the loss of thy Rosalthe?—Alas! never more shall we meet at the step of the broken altar!—never exchange the vows of affection!—never realize the blessed ideas so often pictured by Hope, of future happiness! Oh that I had adhered to the admonition of Father Anselmo!—that I had remained at the cottage, and not heedlessly have rambled to the rock—now should I have been happy—now should I have been serenely sleeping in the blessed asylum of my infancy!"

Thus passed the night, for the entrance of Bianca alone announced the return of morning—no enlivening sunbeams pierced into the chamber—no cheerful birds caroled the pleasures which the day produced—the same dreary cavern presented itself
to

to the view of Rosalthe—the same solitary lamp burning in the centre, and disclosing all the horrors of her melancholy situation. She arose pale and agitated, her faltering steps and swollen eyes betraying the sleepless hours she had passed; and, as she mournfully gazed on the features of Bianca, a fresh torrent of tears streamed down her cheek.—“Have you a daughter?” she enquired, taking her hand, and endeavouring to soften her into compassion. “Oh, if you have, think that you now hear her supplicating for mercy—supplicating for more than life:—fancy her, like me, torn from friends, from peace, from home—fancy her exposed to the hateful passion of a ferocious Bandit.”

The woman frowned—“Lady,” she exclaimed, in angry accents, “be careful what you say! Know that, had I a daughter, it would be my pride, my glory, to see her the chosen of the noble Hildebrand. You know not our chief,” continued Bianca, softening her voice—“with the courage of a lion, he possesses a heart generous and humane—
in

in battle he braves danger to save his followers—in the cavern he is kind and condescending to all around him. But yet an insult he will not brook; and woe be to them who excites his vengeance. He loves you, lady: from the first moment he beheld you at the rock, he has dwelt on your charms, and sighed for your society. Return his passion. Is there a form more prepossessing than his? Is there a countenance more engaging? Every wish of your heart will be gratified.”

Rosalthe sobbed.

“It will be his study to make your’s a life of peace; and his whole troop will act subservient to your orders.”

Bianca paused for an answer; but finding Rosalthe persevere in silence, she quitted the cave, and left her to her own reflections.

Lost, bewildered, not knowing how to act, Rosalthe paced the apartment with a

quick and irregular step—now gazing wildly around—now raising her clasped hands to Heaven: a thousand times did she call upon the dear inhabitants of the convent, upon Dusseldorf, upon Agatha—a thousand times did she whisper the name of Adelbert—but no friends were near to soothe her affliction—no lover to protect her from insult. Defenceless and wretched, she felt all the horrors of her situation; and, in the madness of the moment, invoked death, as the sure respite from misery.—“And yet, I could have wished,” she mournfully articulated, “to have been placed at the side of my sainted mother!—I could have wished my expiring moments to have been softened by the pious prayers of Father Anselmo!—I could have wished my grave to have been sprinkled with the tears of affection!—I could have wished——”

“What couldst thou have wished, my lovely Rosalthe?” enquired Hildebrand, who, entering at the instant, seized her hand.

hand. "Tell me what thou couldst have wished, and, if this wide world contains it, it is thine."

"I could have wished—I do wish," timidly replied Rosalthe, "to be restored to my friends—to be suffered to return to my convent: my heart would feel grateful for the kindness, and my prayers, henceforth, should be offered up for my preserver."

"And dost thou think, Rosalthe," enquired Hildebrand, "a love like mine could be satisfied with the cold return of gratitude and prayers?—Dost thou think, after the pain I have endured for thy sake, after the stratagems I have formed for thy society, I could renounce that society for gratitude and prayers?—No, my angelic girl, gratitude was made for fools—prayers for anchorites and hypocrites. We will live superior to such prejudices—we will live to refute the silly maxims of a priest-bound world."

Rosalthe,

Rosalthe, shuddering, withdrew her hand from the chief.

“ But, to please his lovely captive, even Hildebrand will pray,” pursued the Bandit, sinking on his knees, and regaining by force her struggling hand; “ not by the Virgin, nor by the saints in Heaven, but by thy unparalleled beauties—by thy downy cheek—by thy averted eye—by the joys that await him, he swears Rosalthe never shall quit this cavern but as the wife of Hildebrand.”

“ Then this cavern must be her grave,” replied Rosalthe with momentary courage. “ And listen, proud chief, listen, when she swears, by the Being who made both her and thee, by all we hold dear in this world, and by all our hopes of mercy in the next, never to acknowledge for a husband one whose bread is steeped in the blood of the unoffending, unsuspecting traveller—one whose existence is supported by the misery of his fellow-creatures. Ah no,” with increasing warmth, “ never will Rosalthe
de

de Stellenheim become the *Bandit's Bride!*"

"Rosalthe," said the chief in terrible accents, "my love is thy protection—no living being would dare to breathe what thou hast pronounced—but beware, imperious girl, beware lest my love should turn to hate! Remember, here my word is law—remember, likewise, that the swords of my associates have pierced bosoms white as thine. Escape is impossible (and he cast an exulting glance around the apartment). Remember at this very moment a more exquisite revenge is in my own power."

His eyes explaining the import of his words, froze the heart of the trembling Rosalthe.—"Mysterious Heaven, for what am I ordained?" she mentally ejaculated, crossing her hands upon her bosom.

"Death is terrifying," resumed Hildebrand, ardently gazing upon her pallid features.

"Yes,

“Yes, to the guilty,” quickly interrupted Rosalthe; “but from thy hands it would be mercy.”

The Bandit frowned—“Remember my threat,” he exclaimed—“drive me not to extremity. I love thee, Rosalthe—at the foot of the rock I first beheld thy charms, and from that moment swore to make them mine: my oath is in part fulfilled—Rosalthe is in my power; but ’tis her heart I covet—in exchange for that, had I a diadem, it should be resigned. Love, at the instant I beheld thee, fired my heart—I traced thy footsteps to the cottage, and, from that hour, the fair daughter of the peasant Dusseldorf subverted all my plans of glory and renown. In sleep fancy decked thy faultless form in all its beauty—fancy irradiated thy dove-like eyes, and, beaming with tender rapture, turned them full upon me. I watched thee as a miser would his treasure, or a priest his authority. As thy shadow, I pursued thee to the rock, to the chapel: I gazed on thy recumbent figure—
I envied

I envied the Power which called forth thy vows—I heard thy murmuring lips articulate a prayer—I saw thy azure eyes elevated to Heaven—I longed to kneel by thy side, to awaken thy sensibility, to steal thy heart—I longed to hear thee whisper love—I longed to thaw every icy particle of thy bosom, and turn it all to rapture—I longed to possess thy confidence, thy affection, thy heart, thy soul, nay, thy very soul's soul, Rosalthe, and to tear thee unresisting from the frigid precepts of St. Florensia's community. Concealing myself in the sacristy, my eyes beheld the being I worshipped; and the comfortless aspect of the place quenched not the ardent fire which consumed me. Once I stepped forward—once I was for seizing thee, and by force conveying thee to the cavern; but I remembered, that the stubborn oak, resisting man's united efforts to bend it, might, through the perseverance of one, fall severed from the trunk—I remembered that the fortress, impregnable to the hostile attacks

attacks of an enemy, might, in an hour of fancied security, be ransacked and possessed—I remembered this, and paused: a heavy sigh burst from my bosom; thou heardst it, thou started from the step of the broken altar, and looked fearfully towards the sacristy—my lips tenderly pronounced thy name; thou pressed thy hand upon thy heart, and, uttering an exclamation of horror, rushed from the chapel. I followed thee unperceived—I lost thee at the entrance of the cottage. Rendered bold by desperation, I ventured into the garden, and, as thy parents and thyself encircled the fire, gazed through the casement: Agatha saw me—I heard her shriek, and, smiling at the alarm my presence had created, precipitately quitted the garden. Often at midnight have I hovered round the cottage—often have I gazed upon the dwelling which contained thee—often have I braved the laughter of my associates, and left the cavern for the melancholy

melancholy pleasure of standing beneath thy window."

"Ah, gracious Heaven, how have I been deceived!" interrupted Rosalthe. "How little did I suspect, when I met thee at the rock—when I pointed out the road to the hamlet—when I sighed at thy supposed misfortunes—how little did I suspect, that, through thee, my future life would be embittered!"

"Say not embittered, my Rosalthe," rejoined Hildebrand; "grant me thy love, and not a wish shall thy heart form ungratified."

"Oh," pursued Rosalthe, regardless of the Bandit, and clasping her hands in despair, "that I had but attended to the warning of Father Anselmo! His penetration discovered the disguise, and read the metaphor; but I, weak and unsuspecting, thought not of the threatened danger, and now woefully rue my credulity."

"My passion indeed had there nearly
betrayed

betrayed its object," replied the chief; "I was seated on thy favourite rock, thinking of thee, Rosalthe; and, when I raised my eyes, blooming with a thousand charms, I saw thee standing before me. Thou wast too innocent to develop my sensations—Ah, little didst thou suspect thyself the trembling palpitating dove—little didst thou suspect the Abbess of St. Florensia to be the kite, or I the rescuer. But, mark me, though long withdrawn from the world—though by me its very customs have been renounced—yet, as a strong, an incontestible proof of my adoration, and, at the same time, in compliance, and to remove the scruples which education has implanted in thy nature, I will conform to the rites of marriage. A monk, now my prisoner, shall perform the ceremony, and pronounce Rosalthe my blooming beauteous bride. In the eyes of Heaven I will snatch my prize, and no human power shall wrest her from me. And yet I could hope," pursued the Bandit, his fine features glow-

ing with expressive tenderness, and his voice softening into entreaty, “to possess this snowy hand without compulsion—I could wish my companions to believe it a free gift: speak, Rosalthe, thou shalt be the sovereign directress of myself and my people—I will be thy lover, thy friend, thy husband; and to thy wishes, as to a law, will I implicitly yield. If any thing is wanting to thy comfort, speak,” and with a scrutinizing eye he looked round the sumptuously furnished apartment, warm from the cheerful blaze of a wood fire, and covered throughout with carpeting of the finest texture.

Still Rosalthe was silent.

“Three days I give thee,” he continued, “to compose thy spirits, to resign thy mind to what is inevitable; and on the fourth the priest shall silence every doubt.” He raised her hand to his lips, and, bowing gracefully, quitted the chamber.

Left

Left to her own reflections, Rosalthe gazed fearfully around—"What pity," she exclaimed, "that a countenance so perfect, a figure so noble, should conceal a heart so base! surely had Mercy placed an emblem on earth, it had been in his form. But, alas, how are the works of nature perverted! like an insignificant bauble enclosed in a rich and valuable casket, is a faultless exterior containing a cruel and worthless disposition; whilst the intrinsic diamond, requiring not a gilded case to recommend it to notice, conceals its lustre in obscurity, and must be eagerly sought after, ere its virtues can be ascertained."

In pronouncing the last words, she reached the extremity of the cavern, and perceived the spot on which she stood heave with unusual emotion. Hastily drawing aside the carpet, a square stone was gently lifted up, and a folded paper pressed through the opening. The words of Wilhelm returned to her memory, and

once more did the smiling cherub, Hope, spring in her bosom.

“Even in this cavern I have a friend,” she mentally ejaculated, seizing the paper. “Heaven will shield my innocence; and I shall yet live to praise its bounty.”

She replaced the carpet, and, approaching the fire, threw herself on a sofa to peruse the note; but ere yet her trembling fingers had broken the seal, the deep sound of footsteps solemnly reverberated through the cavern. She hastily concealed the note in her bosom, and turning, beheld Bianca, loaded with every delicacy that could tempt the pampered appetite.

“Hildebrand, our chief, sends me here,” said Bianca, spreading the viands before her—“he fears himself to come, lest he should be termed intrusive; but to-morrow he expects to be welcomed with smiles, and to receive a concurrence of his project

project from your own lips. Why then, lady, should you resist a fate which thousands would envy? Why reject a hand which through life would guard you from danger? I have passed twenty years in this cavern—I have seen many chiefs, but never one so humane, so generous, so handsome as Hildebrand.”

Bianca paused; but Rosalthe making no reply, she quitted her and returned to the outer cavern.

No sooner was the door closed, than Rosalthe, eager to peruse the contents of the paper, hastened to the lamp, and, tearing it open, read the following words:

“IRRITATE not the impetuous Hildebrand—listen to what he says—appear to yield to his proposals; ’tis that alone which can ensure thy safety. He

c 3

will

will not bear opposition, and his very love would make his revenge more deadly. I tremble for thee, but dare not betray my feelings: was I suspected, my life would pay the forfeit of my treachery, and I should fall without the power of saving thee. Policy must be the guide of our actions. Smile upon the Bandit—lull him to security and peace. Fear not to trust me, lady—I once knew parents, friends, and home—I once knew the pride of honour, the dignity of virtue—but 'tis past, and reflection must not be indulged. I thank the Power I have offended, humanity still remains. Yes, Rosalthe, thy tears, thy innocence, thy misfortunes, have roused it into action; and, though a robber, I have still a heart."

Rosalthe gratefully raised her eyes, and murmured a thanksgiving to the Disposer of all good for the mercies vouchsafed.

"Never

“Never again will I despair,” she whispered—“Heaven will watch over its creature, and inspire her mind with sufficient strength to bear the trials allotted.”

She then sparingly partook of the plenty spread before her; and, determining implicitly to be guided by the contents of the letter, composed her countenance, and chased the straggling tears from her cheek.

Hildebrand exulted in the change—he saw her for a few moments—he kissed her no longer reluctant hand—he blessed the unexpected clemency; and when the deep-toned clock announced eleven, tore himself from her society.

No sooner was Rosalthe freed from restraint, than, securing the door, she threw herself on the bed; and, overcome by fatigue and sorrow, for a few short hours lost even the knowledge of her wretchedness.

CHAP. II.

IN the morning Rosalthe was awakened by the noise which the opening of the door occasioned; she started at the appearance of Bianca, who delivered a tender and respectful message from the Bandit, requesting a few moments conference previous to his quitting the cavern. Rosalthe hesitated, and was about to return a denial, when, recollecting the injunction of Wilhelm, she smiled an assent.

“Merciful Heaven, what a fate is mine!” she inwardly ejaculated, as the old woman left the chamber—“doomed to conceal
disgust

disgust and abhorrence beneath the smile of approbation and regard. Yet surely, if circumstances ever warranted deception, the error will be pardoned." Her head rested on her hand, and her eyes were bent dejectedly on the ground. "Perhaps," she continued, musing, "the moment of my deliverance is at hand—perhaps in another hour, removed from the power of the hateful Bandit, I may securely rest beneath the protection of the indulgent friend of my youth, the revered Abbess of St. Florensia—perhaps I may again be pressed to the bosoms of my foster-parents—perhaps I may again behold the Count de Lunenberg, and, happy in his affection, relate the terrors of the present hour. Ah, grant it, Heaven! grant that the orphan of the sainted Adela may yet moisten with tears the hallowed grave of her parent!"

At that moment a noise proceeding from the further end of the chamber aroused her

attention; she looked eagerly around, and beheld, as before, the carpet gently raised; again it fell, and all was hushed in silence.

“Pardon, all-gracious Providence,” she exclaimed, snatching a folded paper, “the offences of the misguided Wilhelm; and may this one act of mercy serve as an obliteration of past errors!”—She tore it open, and with a beating heart perused—

“In one hour Hildebrand and his troop repair to their different stations in the forest, leaving Bianca and myself in charge of the cavern. The moment of escape draws nigh; yet even now, Rosalthe, much depends on your exertion. The Bandit wishes to see you—smile upon him—receive him with tenderness—remember it is the last effort required. A powder, quick and potent in its effects, shall be administered to Bianca; and when sleep

sleep shall have weighed down her eyelids, we will fly from the cavern, nor pause until we reach the sacred walls of St. Florensia. There I will leave my charge, and, exulting in her safety, pursue my dreary pilgrimage to a monastery of Carthusian friars near the spot on which I was born. Alas! the spot which beheld me immaculate—the spot which witnessed my iniquities, shall also witness my repentance. For what but a life of self-denial, a life of ceaseless prayer—of ceaseless anguish—of ceaseless woe, can appease thy *manes*, innocent—suffering—murdered Alexina!”

Rosalthe closed the paper, and, reflecting on the approaching moment of her deliverance, perceived not the entrance of the Bandit.

“Why so thoughtful, lovely Rosalthe?” he enquired, taking her hand. “Would that I might share thy confidence!—would

that every wish of thy ingenuous heart might be poured into my bosom! I would cherish the effusion as a prelude of bliss, and, secure in thy affection, sigh for no other heaven."

"Alas, my wishes have but one direction!" mournfully sighed Rosalthe—"my wishes point to the thatched roof of my unfortunate parents. Even at this moment, when my heart feels more reconciled to my situation, the tear of regret steals down my cheek at the recollection of their sorrow."

"A thousand thanks, dearest captivating Rosalthe," interrupted the enraptured chief, "for this condescension! Mourn not for thy parents—transient will be their affliction; for, ere to-morrow's sun shall set in glory, they shall be made partakers of our happiness. Let me but see thee cheerful—let me but see my angelic bride smile on the nuptial morning—let me see her azure eyes emit the ray of pleasure, and her dappled cheek glow with health, and
not

not to be sovereign of the empire would I exchange my lot."

"To-morrow, when my parents shall know their child in safety, I *shall* be happy," replied Rosalthe.

"Ah, repeat that blessed sentence!" said the astonished Bandit, pressing her snowy hand to his lips—"say, my Rosalthe, may I believe what I hear? May I encourage the flattering hopes which spring in my bosom? Does not thy heart feel repugnance as the moments pass away?"

"No, Heaven knows it does not," eagerly interrupted Rosalthe.

"And wilt thou," pursued the chief, ardently perusing her features, "wilt thou to-morrow give me thy hand? Wilt thou no longer shrink coldly from my love? Wilt thou consent to bless me, Rosalthe?"

"To-morrow," said Rosalthe solemnly, "I will perform all that is required of me."

"And, from to-morrow," replied the Bandit, "my study shall be to promote the
3 felicity

felicity of thy life, and to act worthy thy affection. Blessed moment," he continued, gazing on her blushing cheek, "when auspicious destiny, conducting me to the cliff, disclosed thee to my view! 'Twas then, Rosalthe, though the powers of men had combined, I resolved to make thee mine: and when I returned to the cavern, burning with the remembrance of thy beauties, I swore never to know quiet, until the peerless daughter of Dusseldorf had become the *Bandit's Bride*. But now I must leave thee—now I must tear myself from thy presence, for the already assembled band await the orders of their chief. I go—but thou, my enchantress; art the talisman which transfixes my heart: short will be my absence, for the powerful spell subdues the love of arms—the love of glory—and binds me all to thee."

Rosalthe sighed, and a momentary sadness overspread her features.

"And

“And does my absence,” resumed Hildebrand, “cast that air of pensiveness over thy countenance? May I credit the flattering whispers of my heart? Will the lingering moments pass with anxiety, regret, and fear?”

“*Regret* will mark the fleeting moments,” returned Rosalthe—“whilst *anxiety* and *fear* too surely will be mine.”

“To-morrow they all will cease,” rejoined the Bandit—“to-morrow that tender bosom will be at rest—to-morrow content, happiness, and peace will be thine.”

“The Virgin grant they may!” fervently ejaculated Rosalthe.

The Bandit smiled.—“And thou, my sweet enthusiast,” he continued, “shalt teach me thy faith; thou shalt direct the heart of the proselyte; or, rather, thou shalt be the saint he will worship, and the virgin on whom he will call. No whining priest or hooded anchorite can be half so fervent; for, like a true zealot, whilst my
lips

lips peruse the rubric, my eyes will rest on thee."

Rosalthe shuddered, and with difficulty concealed the abhorrence his impiety created: but she remembered his power, and the part stern necessity compelled her to act.

"And now I must bid thee farewell," resumed the Bandit, bowing on her hand, "lest my associates, unacquainted with the ardour of my feelings, should murmur at my procrastination. Wilhelm and Bianca are alone left in the cavern, and their services thou mayest command. Farewell," he again repeated, pausing at the door of the chamber—"think of to-morrow, my Rosalthe, and be happy."

"To-morrow," mentally sighed Rosalthe, as she listened to the retreating steps of the party dying in distance, "thanks to the generous Wilhelm, I shall be in safety. Oh thou gracious and over-ruling Providence,"

dence," raising her hands and eyes to Heaven, "prosper the undertaking! Shield us with thy mercy, and receive, in my deliverer, a returning prodigal to thy protection!"

Silence reigned throughout the cavern, and Rosalthe, with a beating heart, awaited the appearance of Wilhelm.

"Surely he has not forgotten me!" she exclaimed—"Surely he will not leave me to my fate. Oh Heaven, how swift the moments fly! should the Bandit return, no earthly power can save me."

Thrice she rose to repair to the outer apartment, and thrice, dispirited, she threw herself on the sofa.

"Holy mother of St. Florensia, dearest, blessed guide, never will thy Rosalthe be restored to thee! never more will she listen to thy precepts! never more receive instruction

instruction from thy example! And thou, honoured, beloved guardians of her infancy, respected Dusseldorf, tender Agatha, never more will she share thy love, never more return thy affection. Buried in the warmth of youth, when the joys of life were just opening to her view, she is doomed to all the horrors of a lingering death, without one ray of hope, one faithful friend to cheer her. Generous, chosen Adelbert," she continued, as her heart throbbed with agony, and tears of anguish stole down her cheeks, "thou who, regardless of pride of birth, or want of fortune, would have shared with the supposed daughter of Dusseldorf thy dignity, who would have spurned at the opinions of the world, and defied the keen shafts of its malice, what will be thy despair, what will be thy disappointment, when, glowing with hope, thou wilt repair to the cottage, and, instead of beholding her thou seeketh, shall hear the lamentations of her suffering parents! Perhaps, ere then, sorrow
may

may have broken the heart of thy Rosalthe. Perhaps her fragile form, the yielding prey of grief, may be placed beyond the reach of woe. Perhaps her hovering spirit may linger near thee, may listen to the sighs the remembrance of past hours call forth. Oh grant," and again her eyes were directed towards Heaven, "that peace may spring from affliction! that content, that years of felicity may yet be thine!"

A noise from the outer cavern reached her ear—she started, and, gazing wildly around—"Open to me a passage," she exclaimed. "Holy Mary! shield me from the power of the Bandit! save me from despair, from violence, from distraction!"

"Mercy defend us!" said Bianca, stroaking together the expiring embers, "why the fire is almost gone! come, this log will soon make a cheerful blaze; and then, until the return of the troop, we will sit and talk of our chief's generosity."

"Has

“Has the Bandit a heart?” enquired Rosalthe.

“Aye, surely has he,” replied the astonished Bianca, “and a noble one.”

“Can tears and supplications soften it?” resumed Rosalthe.

“Beauty can,” returned the dame, “and, after to-morrow, so wilt thou acknowledge.”

“Would that on me to-morrow might never dawn!” mournfully sighed Rosalthe.

“Would that in the morning, when he seeketh his bride, a stiffened corse could be found in her stead!”

“If thou valuest happiness, stifle thy complaints,” exclaimed Bianca; “for know, that the Bandit, once irritated, is implacable.”

“Would he, in the violence of anger, sheath his sword in my bosom?—Say,” impatiently questioned Rosalthe, “would he become a murderer?”

“No, lady, he would not murder thee; he would scorn the imputation of a murderer—

derer—he would let thee live, that, to the latest hour of thy life, thou mightest rue his vengeance. I tell thee, as a friend—as a lover, thou wilt find in him all that thou couldst wish; but beware of him as an enemy.”

“Ah, Heaven! is there no alternative?” said Rosalthe, shuddering.

“What alternative canst thou wish?” asked Bianca. “Happiness smiling courts thee, yet wouldst thou shun it. The cold contracted principles thou hast imbibed at the convent of St. Florencia will lead thee to thy ruin. In youth I was like thee; never did a day pass without my repeating an Ave-Maria, and counting my beads. I lived in the clay-built cottage of my father at the foot of a mountain; and when he was attending his herd of goats, I would sit singing the evening service to the Virgin beneath a spreading palm tree. Not a day passed but I visited the cell of Father Benito; sometimes I would present my best offering of eggs—sometimes of vegetables

vegetables from our little garden. Always would he receive them with a smile, and I with a light heart, enriched with the hermit's blessing, would return to the cottage. Whenever I was dissatisfied with my father, or whenever I quarrelled with poor Sebastian, my lover, I could not rest until I had breathed the tale into the ear of my confessor, and received absolution. The shades of night never found me melancholy, nor did the morning dawn upon me discontented. I would rise with the sun from my bed of dried leaves, and, milking my goats, drive them out to the pasturage. But of short duration were my days of simplicity—the tempter came in the form of Guilfred, and the good Benito was forgotten. It was early in the autumn, when the luscious grapes hung heavy on the vine, that he paused to listen to my plaintive ditty.

‘Why, my pretty maid, thou warblest as sweet as the birds in May—methinks I could forget my fatigue in hearing thy music.’

‘Hast

‘Hast thou journied far then?’ I enquired.

‘Ah, many a weary league!’ he replied; ‘but if thou wilt let me rest in thy cottage, I shall have travelled to some purpose.’

‘Rest and welcome as long as thou pleasest,’ I answered, producing some new milk and bread—‘would I had better cheer to offer thee!’

‘What is thy name, sweet one?’

‘Bianca.’

‘Dost thou live alone in this cottage?’

‘No, I live with my father, who is now tending goats upon the mountain.’

‘Come, sit thee down and sing, for thou remindest me of the nightingales in my native forests.’

“I smiled, and he took my hand: and he—oh, he was so different to Sebastian, that, before my father’s return, I vowed never more to think of my former lover; and, before a week had passed, I had ceased to visit the cell of Father Benito; and, before a month had elapsed, I ran away,
not

not with a bandit, but with one of the bravest followers of a bandit. In three years the sword laid him low, poor fellow! and then Conrad told me it was a pity the lustre of my eyes should be dimmed with weeping—‘For thy tears can never bring Guilfred back,’ he argued. ‘Neither can they restore Conrad,’ I exclaimed, when, six months after, he was brought wounded and expiring to the cavern. Cuthbert thought so likewise, and, sooner than leave the band, I listened to his tale. Twenty years have passed away, and if, like thee, I was young and handsome—if, like thee, I was the chosen of Hildebrand, trust me I would act the same part.”

Rosalthe answered not—she turned with disgust from the being before her: her thoughts rested on her deliverer, and her eyes were fixed impatiently on the door. At length it opened, and Wilhelm entered the chamber.

“Sure

“Sure thou art ill, Bianca!” he exclaimed, looking significantly at Rosalthe; “thy cheeks are deadly pale, and thou seemest as though the grave yawned to receive thee.”

“Ill!” faintly repeated Bianca.

“Aye, even unto death,” replied Wilhelm, gravely—“hast thou been frightened? for never did I behold a countenance so altered.”

“Ill!” again murmured Bianca—“methinks I feel a strange sensation at my heart. May Heaven look down upon my sinful head with pity!”

“Well mayst thou say thy prayers,” rejoined Wilhelm; “well mayst thou endeavour to make up thy account, for sure am I a short time will remove thee from the pains of this world.”

Bianca groaned.

“My suspicions are strong,” pursued Wilhelm—“on a shelf in the chamber in
VOL. III. D which

which I sleep, I left a bottle full of a liquid delicious to the taste; sorry am I to say, part of the contents of that bottle is missing, for the being who drank of that liquid, though he was as strong as the wild boar upon the mountain, yet would he surely die."

Bianca, clasping her hands, uttered a shriek of terror.

"Hast thou been so unfortunate as to swallow the poison?" resumed Wilhelm, approaching the terrified Bianca. "Tell me if thou hast, that, if nature will support it, I may administer an antidote."

"Ah, save me!—for the love of Heaven, save me!" eagerly petitioned Bianca. "Oh that I had never quitted my mud-built cottage—that I had never forgotten the precepts of the holy Benito—that I had never ceased to say my prayers, or to count my beads! then might I have been
happy,

happy, then might I have been prepared to meet the shaft, and not thus have shrunk dismayed at the approach of death."

"Is death so terrible?" enquired Rosalthe.

"No, to the innocent it is easy to die—it is easy to close one's eyes," replied Bianca: "but to the being who has trampled on every law, who has followed the impulse of passion, and the dictates of inclination, it is a fearful moment—it is a fearful prelude of the horrors to come."

"Poor wretch!" said Wilhelm, "what wouldst thou give me to procure thee a new lease?"

"Canst thou avert the dart?—Oh, spare but my life," exclaimed Bianca, "and I'll give thee all I have!—the treasure I have been so long amassing shall be thine: I'll kneel at thy feet—I'll be thy slave—I'll adore—I'll worship thee—I'll toil in pain, beggary, bondage, if thou canst but let me live."

"All-protecting Heaven!" ejaculated
D 2 Rosalthe,

Rosalthe, "let the wavering see the end of sin, and tremble!—How poor are the joys of this world! how insignificant the vain pursuits of life! they cannot soothe the infirmities of nature—they cannot dissipate the gloomy vapours of a dungeon, or ease the throbbings of a tortured heart! Give me innocence, give me virtue, though in the garb of penury! though oppressed by affliction, humbled by persecution, give me those supporting, those greatest blessings, and I ask no other boon!"

"Come," said Wilhelm, pouring into a glass the contents of a small vial, "take this draught, Bianca, and we shall see what chance thou hast for life."

Bianca eagerly swallowed the contents, and in a few minutes its soporific quality began to show itself: she threw herself composedly on the sofa, and her eyes were soon closed in a deep sleep. True it is, that, without a cause, uneasiness often possesseth the mind—true it is, that life is
more

more frequently embittered by chimerical miseries than by realities—and, alas! equally true is it, that human nature clings as precipitately to the transient ray of hope, as in the moment of sorrow it doth to despair.

Rosalthe thought the danger past—she looked at the sleeping Bianca, and almost fancied herself in the blest asylum of her infancy. Her countenance resumed its usual serenity, and a smile took possession of those features, which, scarce an hour before, had been saddened with alarm.

“Thus far our stratagem has succeeded,” exclaimed Wilhelm; “the anodyne has placed Bianca beyond the power of injuring us. But yet there is one duty to be attended to ere we quit the cavern.”

Rosalthe looked anxiously towards him.

“It is many years,” resumed Wilhelm, “since I renounced the intercourse of the world—since its laws, its customs, its manners by me were resigned. It was vice that drove me from society—it was vice which, entwining round my heart, drove me from the busy haunts of men, and rendered the world hateful. I swore eternal enmity to fortune, to fame, to family—I swore eternal enmity to mercy, honour, and religion—I madly resigned myself to the pursuits of infamy; and with my associates, the refuse of the world, lived on murder, sacrilege, and plunder. But I had a heart, Rosalthe—I felt the violence I offered nature—I remembered the hours of past innocence—and often saved the aged and the helpless from the swords of my colleagues.”

“Heaven will reward that mercy,” interrupted Rosalthe, “and accept the atonement of sincere repentance!—But we lose time: I tremble lest the Bandit should return. Let us hasten to St. Florensia, and,

and, in its security, I will listen to thy recital."

"Pause but a moment, lady," continued Wilhelm, "and we will fly. Gratitude binds me to the troop—sooner would I die than betray them: but in the moment I abandon the life of a robber—in the moment I go to embrace the cowl, and enter upon the chilling vocations of a monastery—that same moment I must ensure the safety of my associates—I must receive from thy lips a sacred promise, never to divulge the knowledge of this cavern. Thou must swear, Rosalthe—thou must bind thyself by a solemn oath, never to betray the secret, or to endanger the lives or safety of the Bandit or his followers."

"I do," quickly exclaimed the trembling prisoner; "all thou dost wish, I promise—never shall the tale of my sufferings escape my lips—not even to the ear of my confessor will I breathe my knowledge of this cavern."

“Swear by the Power who made thee!” said Wilhelm—“Swear by the mighty Creator of heaven and earth!”

“I do—I do,” solemnly repeated Rosalthe, sinking on her knees and fervently clasping her hands; “and may bliss or misery await the discharge of my oath.”

“Enough,” said Wilhelm—“now let us proceed.”

Rosalthe started. Gay was her heart, and light her footsteps, as she tripped down the passage; the smiling prospect of approaching liberty danced before her eyes, and the long-promised haven of her wishes seemed opening to her view. She reached the summit of the stairs—she paused, impatient for the glare of day—she panted to gaze upon the glorious firmament—to feel the renovating rays of the all-cheering sun—to hear the sweet carol of the forest warblers—and to behold once more the variegated face of nature. Those who have pursued the shadow, happiness, and seen it

it vanish in the grasp—those whose hopes, from the highest pinnacle of expectation, have been dashed in disappointment—those who have seen the sun of bliss set in despair, can alone form some idea of Rosalthe's sensations, when, as the extended hand of Wilhelm prepared to press the spring of the trap-door, the horn sounded.

“We are lost!” fearfully whispered Wilhelm. “Hildebrand is returned.”

Rosalthe heard him not, horror had congealed her heart's blood, and she sunk pale and senseless on his arm.

CHAP. III.

“**R**OSALTHE lost!” exclaimed Father Anselmo, who had attentively listened to the recital of Dusseldorf—“all-mysterious Heaven, now is the metaphor explained!”

“What meanest thou?” enquired Dusseldorf. “Say, holy father, knowest thou aught of my child?”

“Alas, no!” replied the hermit, while an expression of sadness stole over his features, “I know not the fate of Rosalthe; suspicion alone dictated my words, and suspicion is at best unjust and dangerous.”

“But suspicion rises not from ignorance,” interrupted the impatient Dusseldorf;

dorf; "and the anxiety of a parent surely merits the confidence of a friend."

"Hallowed be the feelings of a father!" returned the devotee; "and in thy heart, oh afflicted brother! may Heaven pour the rich balm of its mercy, to enable thee, like a Christian, to support the loss of such a child!"

Dusseldorf mournfully bowed, while sorrow's swollen tear streamed down his colourless cheek.

"I have suffered calamity," resumed the anchorite, gazing on the agitated countenance of the veteran; "but time, the only soother——"

"Talk not of time," again interrupted Dusseldorf; "thy calamities reached thee not in a shape like mine. Alas, the cold doctrine of philosophy eases not the pang of the wounded heart, or chases one tear from the eyes of the afflicted! I have before lost a daughter—I have before bent

under the chastening rod of sorrow—I have watched the weeks, the months, the years, rolling successively away, and found reason and religion the only antidotes to woe. But then I was young: then hope, like yon glorious sunbeams renovating created nature, glowed around my heart, and gave birth to life's warm scenes of anticipation. I pictured her return—I pictured the fervent prayers of a Magdalen, and the tears of penitence embalming the shrine of mercy. But now the fire of youth, the force of imagination is extinguished; and my age's darling, my age's comfort, is wrested from me. Give me, oh man of God! but a clue to recover my lost treasure, and the little span of a being tottering on the brink of the grave shall breathe the return of gratitude."

"I fear," replied Father Anselmo, "my recital, instead of restoring peace, will only spread a deeper air of mystery over the fate of our mutually-loved Rosalthe. But suspense is torture to the feeling mind."

Dusseldorf

Dusseldorf looked anxiously towards him, and again he proceeded.

“On the day of Rosalthe’s return to the cottage, terrified at the danger of the good Agatha, she, as you may remember, in the evening visited my cell. Her anxiety for the safety of the dame had cast a pleasing pensiveness over her features; and the exercise of the walk, together with the fresh breezes of the Baltic, had tinged her fair cheek with an additional glow of beauty. As we descended the rock, we beheld a stranger reclining on her favourite seat—his air was melancholy, but his form faultless. He perceived not our approach; and, from the unconnected sentences he uttered, his breast appeared labouring with some great design.”

“Proceed,” exclaimed the almost breathless Dusseldorf, “for too sure ’tis the villain who has stolen Rosalthe!”

The hermit then gave a succinct account
of

of the adventure which has been already recited; and concluded by observing, that, if ever the eyes of man betrayed the feelings of his heart, the stranger loved Rosalthe.

Dusseldorf paused, his hand was pressed on his forehead in an attitude of cogitation.

"Rosalthe the dove!" he exclaimed, looking attentively at the anchorite; "who then could be the kite, father?"

"I know not," returned the hermit: "remember, my son, it is but the conclusion of my own ideas; and if my suspicions are injurious to the stranger, may Heaven pardon me!"

"Did he look at Rosalthe?" again questioned the veteran.

"He did," replied the recluse; "and with an eye which I thought could not be misconstrued."

"Hast thou not seen him since?" said Dusseldorf.

"Never,"

“Never,” answered Father Anselmo.

“Knowest thou not from whence he came, or whither he was going?” again asked the old soldier.

“Alas, no!—how should I?” replied the devotee.

“Would that I could see him!” rejoined Dusseldorf, “for then I would tear the secret from his heart,” and the expiring fire of heroism rekindled in his eyes, “for then I would——”

“Stop!” interrupted the hermit; “remember that religion is the best weapon in the hand of infirmity—remember that vengeance belongs to God, and not to the weak creatures of his hand.”

“True,” sighed the convicted Dusseldorf, rising to depart.

“Remember, likewise,” pursued Father Anselmo, attending him to the bridge, “that virtue, like gold passing the fiery ordeal, is purified by affliction; and as the sun dissipates the vapours of night, surmounts the waves of sorrow, and subdues the weakness of humanity.”

Dusseldorf

Dusseldorf now descended the rock, and slowly retraced his path to the cottage. But, alas! the admonitions of the *religieux* defended not his mind against the inroad of despair: the information he had received increased his agitation; for he now pictured Rosalthe exposed to all the horrors of a licentious passion, without a friend to rescue her from insult, or support her with consolation.

“Ah, dear and innocent child!” he exclaimed, pausing on the projecting point, endeared as the favourite haunt of Rosalthe, “unsuspicious of others, because thou wast thyself guileless, hadst thou but hinted the approach of a stranger, what sorrow, what anguish would it have spared thee! diligent would I have been to have veiled thy beauty from his gaze; and if the cottage could not have yielded thee security, thou shouldst have slumbered in safety within the all-protecting walls of St. Florensia. But now, secure in his prize,
perhaps

perhaps the merciless ravisher laughs at our sorrows—perhaps even thy tears he beholds unmoved—perhaps, unpitying, he listens to thy supplications. Grant, all-seeing Providence, that Affliction's sharpened arrow, prepared for the devoted dove, may turn, repelled, into his own bosom, and rankle there with all the aggravating pangs of conscience! Ah, what have I dared to breathe!" he continued, as a fresh flood of tears burst from his swollen eyes—"shall I, a weak and sinful man, arraign the wisdom of Heaven?—Shall I award the punishment of a fellow-creature? Pardon the impiety! pardon the presumption!—Change the heart of the unknown persecutor of Rosalthe—plant the seeds of pity in his bosom—and teach him to revere the innocence he would defile!"

Dusseldorf paused at the cottage but a sufficient time to acquaint Agatha with the intelligence he had received from Father Anselmo, and then, leaving her to draw
her

her own conclusions, proceeded to Lunenberg Castle. Fatigued and dejected he entered the hall; no sound broke the death-like silence which prevailed—no moving object gave animation to the scene—a heavy gloom, though in the blaze of mid-day, hung on all around, and seemed, in conformity with Dusseldorf's feelings, to mourn the wreck of happiness.

“Alas,” he exclaimed, as his heart sank with foreboding sorrow, and an unusual melancholy stole over his features, “naught till now in this place have I seen but joy and pleasure! naught have I felt but munificence and condescension! but woefully changed is the scene; and thy fatal loss, thy mysterious disappearance, oh Rosalthe! has murdered all. The heavy cloud which in secret has been gathering, which has already poured its vengeance on my devoted head, has reserved a thunderbolt to crush the hopes of this illustrious family—to destroy the peace, the health, the com-
fort

fort of its heir. Am I endowed with the gift of prophecy?" he continued, slowly ascending the stairs, "or is it the impulse of distraction that whispers to my breaking heart, sorrow, long and multiplied, will be its portion?"

"How fares the Count?" enquired Dusseldorf, entering the housekeeper's apartment.

"Alas," replied Viola, "he has passed but a restless night; his brain still labours with delirium; and, though less violent, his ravings are more pathetic: a thousand times has he called upon Rosalthe; and this morning, when the clock was on the stroke of two, fancying he heard her shriek, he attempted to spring from the bed to rescue her; but weakness effected what my arguments and entreaties had failed to procure; and for one hour after, he lay exhausted and powerless.—'Tis a painful task," she continued, wiping the tears from her cheek, "to witness the struggles

struggles of a being one loves: and Heaven knows, had the Count been the child of my own bosom, I could not have been plunged in a greater sea of anxiety. Often and often, when a baby, have I hushed him to repose. Often have I listened to the tender prattle of his infancy, and foretold him a scion of his father's virtues, courage, and generosity. But, alas! in the perturbation of my mind, I forget to enquire after the author of our uneasiness—hast thou heard aught of thy excellent, thy lovely daughter?"

Dusseldorf shook his head and sighed.

"Come, sit thee down, my good friend," resumed Viola, "and recruit thy almost exhausted spirits. Thine is a heavy affliction—so sweet, so dutiful a child! Often have I seen her hanging on the arm of our young lord, blushing like a new-blown rose, and smiling with an angel's sweetness in his face! Often have I seen her weep at
a tale

a tale of woe! Often have I seen her, with tender commiseration, extend to the distressed the hand of benevolence, and cheer the shivering heart of declining age! Often have I envied her her feelings! Often have I envied the mother who gave her being!"

Dusseldorf for a moment raised his full eyes to Heaven, and again dropped them on the earth.

"If a servant may dare to animadvert on the conduct of her lord," resumed Viola, "I ever blamed the Baron for throwing perfection in the way of the Count: Rosalthe was too good, and too beautiful, not to be beloved; and, long ere the secret came out, I guessed how it would end."

"Ah, no thou didst not!" sobbed the afflicted Dusseldorf.

"True, my picture did not end in sorrow," rejoined Viola; "but how often does Hope flatter us with a distant prospect which time will not realize. Through this

weakness the pang of disappointment may be embittered; but methinks it is frequently compensated by anticipation, communicating a joy which we otherwise should not have experienced."

Dusseldorf shook his head and sighed.

"Life is exposed to a thousand casualties, a thousand dangers, a thousand sorrows," continued Viola, "and our best-laid schemes are frequently rendered abortive. But yet we must remember the Being who leads us in safety; upon whose nod our health, our happiness, nay, our very existence hangs—we must remember, that misfortunes bring us acquainted with our own infirmities; that the intricate path of adversity is the ordeal of virtue. But how is the dame? how is the good Agatha? Tell her, Dusseldorf, no heart more sincerely condoles with her than my own—tell her, that, was it not for the illness of my young lord, I would, ere now, have visited her at
the

the cottage. But come," presenting a glass of wine to the veteran, "cheer thy spirits, and may the Virgin grant us a speedy termination to all our troubles!"

Dusseldorf with difficulty articulated Amen, and, drinking the wine, arose to visit the chamber of the Count. Here, alas! a fresh cause of anguish awaited him—for who unmoved can behold the wreck of reason, or hear the heart-piercing shriek of delirium? Heavy must be the affliction by which this emanation of the soul, this best gift of Heaven, can be dethroned: but there is a deep, a cold, a searching blast, which, penetrating the vital part, irrepulsively seizes the powers of action, which, for a time, may lay in a sullen state of insensibility, but soon, in wild exclamations and irregular starts, will burst forth, and display to the mind of man the most lamentable view of human nature.

Dusseldorf wept as he approached the
bed;

bed; he strove to stifle his sobs, but, alas! he strove in vain. Adelbert looked wildly towards him—he knew him not. The eyes which so recently beamed with the language of social and filial tenderness, were one moment glaring around the room with the terrifying fire of frenzy, the next, closing from weakness, or unmeaningly fixed on vacancy. But, alas! transient was the calm, for, with a convulsive start—"Do not confine me!" he exclaimed. "Take away these cords, they cut my heart!—By Heaven I will not bear it!—Does no one heed me?" panting and struggling on his bed. "They wish to keep me here, Rosalthe, but I will not break my appointment—wait for me in the chapel, love, and soon will I join thee."

Dusseldorf, clasping his hands, turned mournfully away.

"Nay, do not leave me, father," he continued, looking after him. "See, Rosalthe
beckons

beckons me! look how imploringly she turns her dove-like eyes upon me! She is my affianced bride. Nay, do not frown, my Lord, for the priest in sacred vestments awaits us at the altar—and now the mystic rites begin. Rosalthe, where art thou? Ah God, is she fled?—Methought the tapers burnt blue—methought the altar trembled—methought a form arose from the shrine of St. Florensia, and said—‘*Thy vow is registered in Heaven.*’—What vow? Alas, I have forgotten! Well, no matter.—My head!—my poor head!” laying his hand on his temples. “But what is pain?—a trifle. Rosalthe is dead. My bride presses an earthly pillow—and peace will beam no more.”

“Would to Heaven the Baron de Lunenberg had returned!” whispered Dusseldorf; “I tremble for the life of the Count.”

Viola sighed, and the doctor, who, till then, had sat silent by the side of his patient, shook his head, and by his gesture seemed to indicate the apprehension of danger.

“The express cannot reach Dresden before to-morrow,” said Viola; “consequently the Baron must be nearly three days before he arrives at the castle.”

“God alone knows what three days may produce,” sighed Dusseldorf, “or who may live to see them.”

“Does the storm continue to pelt?—does the thunder roar?” quickly enquired Adelbert. “Oh yes, I hear it!—It rocks thy grave, my Rosalthe—it washes the rose from the mossy bank, and the thorn into my heart—but no matter, I will wear it for thy sake, love; and when with pain I am weary, I will lay me down by thy cold side and sleep. Fair was my prospects—fair the opening day of my existence! As the rising dawn I awoke—pleasure invited me forth—gladness and joy were my salutations. But now my eyes are dimmed by the tear of misfortune—affliction has blighted the bud of my hopes—has blasted the bloom of my splendour—and the years of maturity, keen as
is

is the scorpion's sting, are tinged with sorrow."

"Dreadful! dreadful!" sobbed Dusseldorf, raising his eyes in meek humility to Heaven.

Viola stood at the bed's foot and wept.

"Guard well the infant," continued the distracted Adelbert—"shelter its tender weakness—warm its chilled form—hush it to repose. Sweet babe, the cold earth was thy cradle, and the rain fell unpitying on thee! Thy mother too, no covering had she, save the canopy of Heaven, and even that thundered its vengeance upon her defenceless head! Poor fugitive, her heart was breaking!—she gave thee her child, Dusseldorf, and died. Perhaps the figure in the chapel"—he paused—" 'tis a fearful mystery—but time, time will elucidate all. Rosalthe, my father, is not the humble being thou thinkest—Rosalthe is not the laughter of the peasant Dusseldorf."

“What can my Lord mean?” enquired Viola, looking eagerly in the face of the veteran.

“At Lindenthal Castle I have seen her mother,” continued the Count, “for Rosalthe is the child of the Lady Adela. Would I could have met with Friar Lawrence! but even there disappointment awaited me. Now ’tis too late—imperfect is human foresight—mutable is human bliss—Rosalthe is dead, and despair must be my portion.”

He raised his eyes to Heaven as if imploring mercy—quickly he recalled them, and turned them full on Dusseldorf.

“Dost thou not know me, my Lord?” enquired the veteran.

He answered not, a crimson glow flushed his cheek, and, for a moment, the light of reason appeared to regain her empire. But, alas! it only animated his features to
impress

impress more strongly the trace of anguish, and vanished. Wild frenzy darted from his eyes; heavy sighs and convulsive starts betrayed the agitation of his mind; and, at length, a flood of tears drowned the tumult of his soul.

Dusseldorf's feeling heart echoed sigh for sigh, and returned tear for tear. He could not bear the scene—his bosom laboured with the weight of woe, and he walked hastily to the window.

“Alas!” he exclaimed, “is the season of gaiety to be spent thus? Is there no means of alleviating the terrifying agony of delirium? Unhappy Count! Unhappy Baron! miserable father of a miserable son!”

Exhausted and powerless, Adelbert reclined on the bed; his eyes were closed, and in insensibility he appeared to have forgotten the source of his grief.

Dusseldorf hung over him for a few moments in silence; and, thankful for his apparently comparative state of happiness, quitted the chamber and bent his steps to the cottage.

"Alas, thy countenance forebodes sorrow," said the dame, as she met him at the garden gate—"I fear to enquire for the Count."

"He is alive," rejoined Dusseldorf in a voice of agitation.

"Holy Virgin! is that all?" shrieked Agatha—"is there no hope?"

"I fear but little," replied the sympathizing Dusseldorf; "the Count is dangerously ill, and some days must elapse ere the Baron can reach the castle. 'Tis a fearful time——should he die——"

"Die!" repeated Agatha—"St. Mary forbid! for what then would become of Rosalthe?"

"What is become of Rosalthe?" mournfully sighed the old soldier.

"Heaven

“Heaven knows!” sobbed the dame.—
“Heavy and insupportable afflictions hang over us. What have we committed? how have we sinned, oh all-avenging, all-omnipotent Being! to draw upon us the severity of thy displeasure?”

Dusseldorf frowned.—“Question not the justice of Providence, Agatha,” he exclaimed; “for ill does it become us, bred in sin, conceived in sorrow, to arraign the dispensations of our all-wise Creator. Let us submit without repining—let us go to the chapel, my beloved Agatha—let us kneel at the foot of the broken altar, and offer up our heart’s fervent devotion for the restoration of Rosalthe—for the recovery of the Count. We are told that the prayers of the truly contrite are not disregarded—that our Almighty Father compassionates the anguish of the woe-worn heart. Come, let us go,” continued Dusseldorf, rising; “I long to reach the consecrated pile—I long to withdraw my thoughts from

the world, to hold communion with Heaven."

"Alas," sobbed the dame, "I dare not visit the chapel; the horrors of the last night are still fresh in my memory, and my heart sinks at the possibility of encountering the figure."

"Then I will go alone," said Dusseldorf in a dejected tone; "stay thou for safety in the cottage, Agatha; religion is my defence, and thus armed, even though it were a spirit, I do not fear it."

The dame threw her arms round the good man's neck and wept.

"Pardon my hesitation, pardon the weakness of nature," she sobbed. "I will accompany thee, my beloved husband—I will go with thee to the chapel—nay, shouldst thou desire it, even to the distant corners of the world: for the being who for five-and-forty years has shared thy pleasure, has partaken of thy happiness,
will

will not ungratefully shrink in the moment of fancied danger."

CHAP. IV.

“**L**OVELY, ill-fated Rosalthe!” sighed Wilhelm, as he supported his senseless burden down the stairs, “vain are my efforts to save thee—vain are thy tears, thy piercing lamentations, Hildebrand will heed them not: rendered furious by thy hate, he will scruple not to trample on every law, and bend thee to his purpose. Alas, thy shrieks, thy struggles, cannot penetrate these rocks; and, save mine, no heart within them is attuned to pity. Heaven alone can shield thy innocence—Heaven

alone can avert the horrors of thy destiny!"

Again the horn sounded.

"Patience, patience, Hildebrand!" pursued Wilhelm, placing Rosalthe on a sofa, "humanity binds me here; for though thou wert frozen by the blast of winter, yet would I not attend thy signal. Sweet maid," he continued, applying restoratives to the still-fainting Rosalthe, "would, with life, I could restore peace to thy bosom! Look up, revive," for the reflowing tide of life tinged with pink the lips and cheeks of the hapless prisoner.

"Still in this cavern," she murmured, mournfully resting her eyes on Wilhelm. "Oh holy Virgin, guide me, cheer me, direct my tottering steps—furnish a clue to extricate me from this labyrinth of woe!"

Once

Once more the horn, shrill and piercing, echoed through the cavern. Rosalthe started from the sofa—she clasped her hands—she would have fled she knew not whither, had not Wilhelm detained her.

“Stay, Rosalthe,” he exclaimed, forcibly grasping her hand, “remember thou art surrounded by perils—remember my life and thy safety depends upon thy own conduct. Caution and circumspection are necessary; and if I see thee thus agitated, how can I expect resolution and power in the moment of necessity. Remember me thy friend, and at night expect to hear from me. Now I must leave thee, lest suspicion stealing into the heart of Hildebrand should subvert all our future plans. Farewell. And now, my noble commander, hypocrisy must be my cloak.”

“Curse the horn,” yawned Wilhelm as the trap-door sprung open, “it has awa-
E 6 kened

kened me out of the finest sleep I have been in this month."

"Mayst thou have had sleep enough for a month," replied the half-angry Bandit; "for had danger driven us for shelter to the cavern, thy watchfulness would not have saved us."

"What can a man do," exclaimed Wilhelm, "who through life has been as much the sport of his passions as a feather before the wind, now up, now down, yielding to each succeeding gust—one moment clinging to a thistle, the next caught by a rose. The truth of the story is, for the truth must come out, the bait was alluring, and——"

"Wilhelm," interrupted Hildebrand, half unsheathing his sword, "if in thought thou hast dared to injure Rosalthe, tremble, for thou knowest me."

"Aye, quite as well, my noble commander, as I would wish to know you. But my confession has nothing to do with your prize, for the sweet contented soul

is as safely caged, as when you left the cavern. Soon after you set out upon your expedition, by chance I stumbled upon a flaggon of delicious muscadine—I liked the flavour—Bianca liked the flavour also—I pledged Bianca—Bianca pledged me—and at last we both fell asleep together.”

“Let her sleep on,” said Cuthbert, “and dream of Guilfred and Conrad, for where she laments them once, I do twenty times.”

It was evening ere Bianca recovered the effects of the opiate: the whole day she reclined on the sofa, for Rosalthe, feeling for her as a fellow-creature, suffered her not to be removed.

“Wilt thou save me? Shall I live? Canst thou subvert the poison?” she eagerly enquired, when, recovering, she fixed her eyes on Wilhelm.

“I know not what thou meanest, Bianca; sure thou hast been dreaming,” he replied, looking significantly at Rosalthe.

“Is

“Is muscadine poison?” enquired Hildebrand, smiling.

“Art thou sure it is but a dream?” resumed Bianca—“’tis well I am awakened, for, had I slept much longer, I should have dreamt myself into the other world.”

No sooner was Rosalthe left in solitude than images of despair crowded upon her imagination—Hope’s pleasing train of visionary blessings had vanished, and sorrow and darkness remained behind. With folded arms and tearful eyes she paced the chamber—now musing on her late disappointment, now musing on the agonizing doubts of the unfortunate Adelbert.

“And yet perhaps thou art spared my present misery,” she mentally ejaculated—“perhaps thou hast not heard the fearful tale of my disappearance—perhaps, ere thou knowest thy Rosalthe lost to thee, she may be lost to the world, may be numbered with the silent dead. Pardon my murmurs,

murmurs, all-seeing Heaven!" she continued, as the well-known signal reached her ear, "thou hast softened the heart of a deluded being, and in a robber I have found a friend."

She snatched a paper, and, by the fire's cheerful blaze, perused the following lines:

"YOUR features are bleached with fear—your eyes turn imploringly towards me. Despair not, Rosalthe, I work in secret, and the Power in whom you trust, the Power who has heretofore preserved you, will not fail. The monk now the prisoner of Hildebrand is in the morning to be released from his dungeon. Life and liberty will be offered him, upon the condition of pronouncing you the *Bandit's Bride*. Do not tremble—I have secretly conversed with Friar Lawrence—he knows the tale of your misfortunes—he has wept
at

at your sorrows, and prayed for your returning peace. He fears not a prison—he fears not death—he has lived uprightly, and defies the power of the tyrant. How strong is the support of virtue!—how conspicuous did it shine forth in the pious boldness of the holy father! Oh that I could recal the hours that are passed!—that in youth I could have foreseen the gnawing anguish of a guilty heart, and the calm serenity of an unburdened conscience! But I sunk a willing victim to the example of my associates, and became, like themselves, dissolute and depraved. A faithful friend do we find in the dog, a generous enemy in the lion; but man, deceitful man, poisons the cup, and smiles as he presents it. Alas! alas! Rosalthe, ere I bid you adieu, I will ease my tortured bosom, and claim from your sympathizing heart the tear of compassion.”

In the morning the Bandit hastened to Rosalthe, love, rapture, exultation, irradiating his countenance. His dark eyes beamed with unusual fire as they rested on her pallid features; and his faultless figure bent gracefully on her reluctant hand.

“The long wished-for moment is arrived,” he exclaimed—“Rosalthe, adored, peerless Rosalthe, I am come to claim thy vows, to receive thy hand, the precious meed of my constancy. Say,” and he sought to seal with a kiss her trembling lips.

She shrieked—she struggled—horror overspread her countenance, and amazement filled the breast of the disappointed Bandit.

“Say,” he at length articulated, “perverse, inexplicable maid, what am I to think?—how can I resolve this conduct? In the moment when, like a flower bending
beneath

beneath the heat of a mid-day sun, thou seemest to yield to my ardent entreaties, I find thee cold as the morning dew, inflexible as the adamantine rock. Say," he continued, "have I rival? Is there a being dearer to thy heart than myself?"

Rosalthe trembled.

"For if there is," and his eyes darted fury, "though seated upon the throne of kings—though the proud ruler of the German empire, my vengeance, like Etna's destructive flame, burning unextinguished, will pursue him, and aim the dart of death. Now mark me, proud beauty, the priest approaches—thou art in my power—trifle not with my love—for, by the Being who made me, by the hell which may receive me, thou leavest not this cavern unpossessed."

Half fainting, Rosalthe reeled a few paces, and sunk in the Bandit's arms. Ter-
rified

rified at the alarming consequences of his threat, he cursed his impetuosity, he folded her to his beating heart, and loudly called for the assistance of Wilhelm.

“Pardon me, Rosalthe,” he exclaimed, as he wiped from her cheek the pearly drops of sorrow; “let my love, my adoration, plead an excuse for ungoverned passion.”

He knelt as he supported her—he watched her internal conflicts—he endeavoured, by soothing promises, to alleviate her anguish; and when with returning power she shrunk from his arms—when a pale red once more tinged her lovely countenance, and a sweet anxiety stole over her features, he respectfully pressed her trembling hand to his heart, and again trusted to the powers of supplication.

“Rosalthe,” he exclaimed, “if thou hast compassion, listen to me. Tell me what
can

can procure thee peace?—Tell me if this cavern, obscured from the light of day, oppresses with melancholy thy gentle spirits?—Tell me if thou sighest for the verdant lawn, the wood-crowned mountain, or darkening forest? for I will go with thee to the verge of the globe to see thee smile—I will renounce my occupations, my pursuits, my colleagues, to see thee happy.”

He silently waited her reply; but Rosalthe, shuddering, repeated the word, “happy!” and again sunk in despondency.

“I cannot bear thy agitation—I cannot bear thy sobs,” resumed the chief—“name but the sacrifice, Rosalthe, to gain thy confidence, and I will make it.”

“Restore me to my beloved abbess of St. Florensia,” exclaimed Rosalthe.

“And can my misery alone satisfy thee, inflexible girl?” sighed the Bandit. “Canst thou be happy in another’s woe?—Can thy

thy heart partake of peace, when thou hast banished it from the breast of thy lover? No, Rosalthe—ask the pelican to forsake its young, the rein-deer to herd with the lion, and then ask me to resign thee.”

“Then,” sighed Rosalthe, as she crossed her hands on her bosom, “the last hope has failed—the hour of trial is at hand, and may Heaven support me in the emergency!”

The Bandit frowned.

“The priest awaits,” he exclaimed, as he led her reluctant to the outer cavern. “Avaunt vain fears and useless lamentations! no more of tears, of faintings, and female subterfuge.—my will is law in this retreat; and even by thee, who by a smile could bend me as thy slave, my will *shall* be obeyed.”

Rosalthe timidly raising her eyes, met
the

the figure of the holy Lawrence. She gazed with reverence, with awe, with adoration: he seemed as a messenger of Heaven, descended to speak peace to her oppressed heart. His long white beard flowed down to his middle—his countenance was furrowed with age, but serenity marked his brow—a few grey hairs were scattered on his forehead—from his neck hung a string of large beads, with a crucifix impending at the end, and his venerable form was supported by a pilgrim's staff. His eyes, beaming with pity, rested on Rosalthe, and from her with a holy boldness they fixed on the Bandit.

“Thy office here, reverend father,” said Hildebrand, “is to proclaim this maid my bride: long have I loved her, long have I sighed to make her mine. In compliance with the modes of custom, and the narrow prejudices of education, I yield to the forms of priesthood, and the rites of marriage.”

riage. Pronounce the ceremony—upon those conditions, and those only, liberty and life are thine.”

“Knowest thou what thou offerest me?” mildly replied the father; “look at my furrowed countenance, my bleached locks, and palsied form—look at my sunken eyes, my colourless cheeks, and tell me how long the lease of life may be purchased?”

“Dost thou mean to mock me with idle cant?” resumed the chief; “or dost thou mean to insinuate the bribe is not worth the purchase? If avarice be the ruling passion of thy soul, I will humour thee—riches great and inexhaustible shall be thine—thou shalt bend beneath thy load of treasure—thou shalt drink from cups once pressed by the holy hands of saints, and round thy neck shall hang a cross torn from the image of thy worshipped Virgin. Say, wilt thou perform the ceremony!”

“Pause,” exclaimed the hermit, “and know that the devoted servant of the all-seeing

seeing Power thou blasphemest scorns thy bribes, trembles at thy sacrilege, and condemns thy impiety. Though alone, though old and unprotected, he fears thee not; neither does he fear thy myrmidons."

The sword of Otho was half unsheathed, but a sign from the Bandit replaced it.

"Nor would he for one short moment exchange his soul's comfort for all thy boasted wealth."

"Dost thou despise my offer then?" exclaimed the enraged Hildebrand—"dost thou scorn my proffered mercy? Is life so poor a bribe?"

"It is, compared with honour, imperious chief," interrupted the holy Lawrence. "Yon trembling victim, with imploring eyes and palpitating heart, expects compassion from my sacred order—Thou shalt find it, fair maid," turning to Rosalthe. "Ah, no stranger art thou to my eyes, for in that finished form, that faultless face,
methinks

methinks I now behold a being, long since lost, like thee, the sport of tyranny and sorrow. Fear not, for by the all-just, all-seeing Power which rules us, never shall my lips profane the sacred covenant of marriage, by yielding thee to the unhallowed passion of a lawless Bandit."

"Thy undaunted spirit fills me with wonder and amazement," rejoined Hildebrand; "'tis a pity it should glow beneath a pilgrim's weeds. If thou was young—though the captive of my will—though thy very breath hangs on my sovereign power—yet would I meet thee in the field, and see thy valour's prowess. But now thy age is thy protection; for thy nerveless arm cannot hurl the missile dart, or poise the deathful spear. Yet brave me not, lest on the rack I have thee stretched, and hear unmoved thy piercing cries for mercy."

"Dost thou think to intimidate—dost thou think to make me tremble?" asked the hermit, mildly; "what is death that I
VOL. III. F should

should fear it? Terrible it may appear to one like thee; but to the steady worshipper of virtue, 'tis to triumph: to die—to join the great, the good, the just—to close this dreary pilgrimage—to enter on the blest haven of repose, and meet those we have known, have loved, have lost—to behold at once the bright glory of the ethereal, and to join with saints and martyrs in endless songs of praise—this is to die! for this, who would not close their eyes—who would not sleep to wake again for ever?”

“Tear him hence,” vociferated the enraged Bandit; “drag him to his dungeon; chain him to the earth; load him with irons; and we shall see how like a martyr he can bear to suffer.”

“Stay,” shrieked Rosalthe, seizing the cloak of the hermit; “avert the cruel order; on my knees I plead for mercy. Oh, injure not this holy man! Remember the majestic oak, which in the forest rears its lofty head, once lay among the scattered leaves an unheeded acorn; remember, the
being

being whom thou fanciest defenceless, whose blood thou wouldst wantonly spill, may yet in judgment rise up against thee, and when too late convince thee of the awful, the retributive power of offended justice: remember——”

“Hush, hush, sweet suppliant!” said the chief, as, with an air of tender concern, he raised Rosalthe from her kneeling posture; “thou must not bend to me, whose service through life will be to worship thee. Nay, turn not from me, for my wrapt soul hangs on thy beauty as does the lambent flame of an expiring lamp—now sinking by thy scorn—now rising into rapture—now burning, raging, struggling for freedom, cursing the power which draws me to thee—now gazing on thy shape, thy face, thy eyes, till rage itself is swallowed up in tenderness. Yet beware, unpitying girl! my heart cannot long sustain this clash of passions—beware, lest, like the lamp, the flame should sink extinguished,

and darkness, vengeance, sorrow, should remain behind."

"Withdraw the cruel sentence," said Rosalthe, grasping the arm of the Bandit; "spare from the horrors of a dungeon the venerable, the pious Lawrence! spare his weakness, spare his age, and Heaven and I will bless thee!"

"Alas! what hast thou said? ill-fated, unhappy maid!" exclaimed the hermit; "think not I shrink at a dungeon's gloom, or dread the threats of tyranny in the cause of virtue. My soul despises danger; Heaven has given me strength; and human weakness, at the sight of oppression, vanishes like dew before the rays of morning."

Rosalthe sobbed. Still she clung to the cloak of the friar, and still were her eyes imploringly fixed on Hildebrand. Discontent sat on his brow, and anger crimsoned his cheek. Distracted between the thirst
of

of revenge, and the powerful emotions of love, he knew not to which to give the preference: his arms were folded together, and his bosom heaved with a labouring sigh.

“Hence, vain delusion!” he at length exclaimed, regardless of those around him; “shall I, who till now gloried alone in the trumpet’s shrill sound, the clang of arms, the din of battle—shall I disgracefully submit to the capricious indifference of my captive? shall I sigh at her feet, and change, like Hercules, my club into a distaff? Forbid it, pride, courage, glory—no longer shall the frowns of unkindness daunt my ardent spirit. Avaunt, meek-eyed Pity! henceforth Hildebrand will not be thy slave.”

“Soften him, or you are lost,” whispered Wilhelm.

“Alas!” sobbed Rosalthe, as her eyes fearfully rested on the glowing features of

the handsome Bandit, "from whence may this change have proceeded? how have I forfeited thy compassion? how have I excited thy anger?"

"Rosalthe," said the chief, grasping her hand, "I love, I adore thee; 'tis in vain I struggle with a passion destiny, in the first moment I beheld thee, made eternal. I could wish to subdue my nature—I could wish to be all tenderness, all submission—I could wish to efface from thy mind every unpleasant idea thou mayest have conceived—I could wish to be to thee, as thou art to me, my all of happiness; but thy indifference, thy contempt, drives me to distraction. Now, mark me: look at the bending form, the aged face of Friar Lawrence; view well his bleached locks, and venerable aspect; and remember, that upon thy nod hangs his safety, upon thy smile his life. Have mercy, Rosalthe, not upon me, but upon this servant of Heaven! Have mercy likewise on thyself;

thyself; for when my rage is kindled, when the hermit in a deadly groan, expires, I will bend thy stubborn virtue, and teach thee to deplore the clemency despised."

"Heed not his threats," said the undaunted friar; "persevere in virtue, and the blessed Virgin will shield thy innocence. And thou, implacable Bandit, know that the wrath of Heaven hangs upon thee—know that thy days are numbered—know that the hour approaches which will close thy power; and when in pity death shall rid the world of thy tyranny, remember the words of Friar Lawrence—remember that condemnation is a warning scorned!"

"Drag him to his dungeon," again vociferated Hildebrand; "let not his impoisoned venom reach her ear."

"Stay but a moment," said the hermit, struggling; but the order of the chief was not to be disobeyed; and the aged prisoner was forced from the apartment.

As he passed through the door, he turned his eyes upon Rosalthe; her face was pale as the new fallen snow, and her bosom heaved with sighs of anguish.

“ Despise the sufferings of mortality, Rosalthe,” said the anchorite; “ live for futurity, and be happy: for by the living God I abjure thee——”

Otho slammed the door violently, and the unfinished sentence died in distance.

CHAP. V.

“**W**EEP not, Rosalthe,” said Wilhelm, as he closed the door of the chamber; “thy tears unman me—thy sighs penetrate my soul. Reason teaches us to subdue affliction; and if we listen to her dictates, she will always triumph. Integrity, honour, conscious innocence, will support thee under the utmost malignity of fortune; and, secure in such a barrier, her most envenomed darts, though they may annoy, can never reach thy heart.”

“True,” sighed Rosalthe; “our thoughts are hid from man, but the Omniscient can read and judge them; and those who trem-

ble not at its cognizance, though their pilgrimage be long, their life sorrow, yet hereafter will they be admitted to a world where injustice cannot enter, where tyranny can hurt no more. But alas! how exquisite are the sufferings of mental pain! how far superior to the anguish of the body! the one often yields to the balm of medicine—the other defies the sensitive powers of nature, or the physician's most elaborate skill."

"I have, I do feel its anguish," replied Wilhelm; "I am acquainted with the sensations of nature, and acknowledge the hypothesis just. But I feel, Rosalthe, what thou never canst—not the pains and distresses, the doubts and perplexities, arising from the casual exigencies of sublunary uncertainty—not the visionary fears, the frustrated hopes, which adhere so closely to human nature—not the aggregate of ills which surround us—not the arrows of fortune, which in a moment may render our fairest prospects delusive and evanescent

cent—but the piercing shafts of conscience, the gnawing agony of remorse. Strong and barricadoed gates may secure us from the inroads of the nocturnal plunderer; but against the tortures of the mind there is no defence.”

Rosalthe raised her eyes to Heaven, and in the gratitude of her heart, whispered a thanksgiving to the throne of mercy for having spared her the miseries Wilhelm had so feelingly deplored.

“In this state of probation,” resumed Wilhelm, “we cannot always expect the gale to be prosperous—we cannot always expect to be wafted on an unruffled stream, free from latent rocks, and inauspicious blasts: but our wants and wishes, our joys and sorrows, are comparative; and believe me, those who never felt adversity, can form but a faint idea of the sweets of happiness. Little wouldst thou have expected, Rosalthe,” he continued, smiling, “to
F 6 have

have found a philosopher in this dreary cavern."

"Little did I expect to have found a friend," interrupted Rosalthe.

"Thou hast found both," rejoined Wilhelm, "though I trust my friendship will prove more firm than my philosophy; for in the converse of the world, it never saved me from intemperance, or for a moment preserved my heart from sin."

"One deed," said Rosalthe, "will atone for past errors."

"Name it," eagerly enquired Wilhelm.

"Save but the holy Lawrence from the threatened vengeance of the Bandit," resumed Rosalthe, "and Heaven in thee will pardon the rescuer of its chosen servant."

"Would it were practicable," mournfully sighed Wilhelm; "but I fear the hand of destiny can alone snatch him from impending fate."

"And I," said Rosalthe, fearfully.

"Art doomed to suffer," rejoined Wilhelm.

Rosalthe

Rosalthe clasped her hands and sobbed.

“ But canst thou not lighten the lingering horrors of confinement?” she enquired, after a painful pause; “ canst thou not cheer the damp gloom of a dungeon, and remove from his weak and aged limbs the heavy and corroding irons?”

“ All this is done,” replied Wilhelm. “ Last night, when sleep benumbed the faculties of my associates, I stole into the hermit’s prison. Never shall I forget the scene of virtuous resignation there displayed. He lay reclining on his straw bed, his head resting on a loose stone he had converted into a pillow. His eyes were closed in the sweet sleep of innocence, and a heavenly composure irradiated his serene features. I knelt by his side—I gazed with awe and wonder—I raised the cross which hung from his neck to my trembling lips—I reviewed with contrition my past life ; religion inspired me with momentary hope—I looked fearfully to-

3 wards

wards Heaven; and as my eyes rested on the saint-like being before me, my heart beat quick, and conscience reproachfully enquired for what one good purpose I had lived? For repentance, I murmured. I looked around: the form of Alexina, long since shrouded in death, seemed to flit in the distant gloom; and clasping my hands on my eyes, I sunk horror-struck on the earth. The noise awakened the hermit: he started, and gazed undismayed on my agitated countenance.

‘Wherefore, like the midnight assassin, dost thou steal upon my privacy?’ enquired Friar Lawrence; ‘wherefore, when lost in the apathy of sleep, dost thou prepare to strike the blow? If murder be thy mission, fear not to meet resistance. Thou knowest not the meek follower of christianity. I will bare my bosom to the will of my Redeemer; and the last faltering accents of my lips shall be to implore a pardon for the weak instrument of another’s vengeance.’

‘Teach

‘Teach me thy fortitude, teach me thy hopes,’ I exclaimed, fixing my eyes steadfastly upon him, ‘teach me to live, that I may meet death as thou wouldst, and the blessing of a repentant, sorrowing heart will rest upon thee.’

‘Save Rosalthe, my son,’ said the hermit, as a gleam of joy overspread his countenance; ‘conduct her in safety to the convent of St. Florensia, and the work of thy reformation will be begun.’

“Holy and blessed father!” sighed Rosalthe, as her tearful eyes were raised in gratitude; “even in that moment of exigence thou didst not forget the being who, in the morning, thy fortitude, courage, and magnanimity, had rescued from immediate destruction.”

“He smiled at my endeavours to lighten his dreary solitude,” resumed Wilhelm; “and told me, that long inured to hardships, he shrunk not from the damp walls
of

of his prison, or the threatened vengeance of his detainer.

‘Sorrow,’ he exclaimed, ‘frequently arises from imaginary sources, and real evils too often spring from the impoisoned arrows of vice.’

“But thou art thinking of thy own woes, Lady,” continued Wilhelm; “thy streaming eyes and pensive aspect betray the secret. Let thy faith subdue thy tears; let hope ever keep an object in sight, though the vista should be lengthened by the perspective of expectation; for the Being who yesterday saved thy heart from the horrors of a compulsory marriage, will not yield thee a victim to anguish and despair. But come, methinks I can awaken thy attention—methinks I can call thy thoughts from the contemplation of thy own afflictions. The banditti, save Otho and myself, have quitted the cavern: he is now seated with Bianca, in the next apartment, delineating the joys of the free-booter’s life. The path to the trap-door
lies

lies through that chamber; 'tis therefore impossible to effect an escape; for if the most distant suspicion should enter the mind of Hildebrand, my life would instantly fall a sacrifice to his resentment. I will pass the lingering hours in opening to thee the secrets of my heart: I will no longer hide what, if disclosed, may in part relieve my bosom of its burden, by enabling me to claim the soothing offices of thy friendship; for grief, when imparted, becomes lighter, through the assuaging powers of sympathy."

Rosalthe sighed: she felt that sympathy could not mitigate the anguish she endured; for alas! the thorns of anxiety were too deeply implanted in her bosom; and when Wilhelm commenced his narrative, her head sunk upon her arm, and she looked like the drooping lily surcharged with rain.

"Alas! the tears of a Magdalen cannot
wash

wash away the stains of guilt, or expunge from memory the past expiring struggles of virtue !”

“ These were the words,” exclaimed Wilhelm, “ which memory has carefully treasured—which, in the hours of infancy, when reclining on the bosom of my mother, she breathed in the fullness of an aching heart. She was the child of simplicity—the guileless offspring of innocence—the once unadulterated votary of virtue. But she fell an early victim to sensibility—an early victim to the designing arts of man. The delusion of love led her astray from the rules of religious strictness: but she sinned against conviction; for her principles were never shaken. Melancholy hung upon her features—remorse preyed upon her peace: she sighed to regain the path of virtue, but affection long sustained the struggle—distraction was in the separation; for the object of her early vows, of her romantic love, must have been left behind.

“ In

“ In this state of remorse and sorrow, time glided away; and Providence, to regain a wavering penitent, kindly snatched from the pains of mortality, kindly received to his bosom, her darling, her tender, her only daughter. The mind of my unfortunate mother, already enervated, sunk beneath this chastening stroke; and for many months she refused all consolation, and at length yielded to a deep corroding melancholy. The long dormant seeds of virtue were awakened in her heart; and the mild and heavenly influence of religion shot through her soul, and pointed out repentance and forbearance as a sure road to mercy.

“ During this mental derangement, she formed the resolution of resigning every tie nature had formed; and writing a pathetic transcript of her feelings to her too tenderly-beloved seducer, recommended me, her only child, to his paternal care and protection. She left us to return no more; and no clue of her retreat could we ever discover.

“ My

“ My father,” continued Wilhelm, “ was affluent ; his birth noble ; his person handsome ; his manners insinuating ; his situation dignified ; his heart——but he was my father, and the remembrance shall seal my lips. His errors cannot take from my own guilt ; ah, no ! rather should they have been a woful example—an example to turn his son from sin, and fix him ever in the path of virtue. But pardon this digression, Rosalthe ; it is not the enormities of others I should paint—alas ! it is the calamities of my own wretched and eventful life.

“ Educated in my father’s false and erroneous tenets, I thought the world was made for pleasure, and man for enjoyment—I thought that religion was the cloak for subordination, and priesthood the spell of policy and design—I thought that our passions were the master-pieces of nature, and that inclination should be the guide of our actions. Thus tutored, little can it be wondered at that at an early age

age I plunged into the mazes of folly : my intimates encouraged me in the pursuit, and I soon became, in every species of intrigue and seduction, a consummate master. I never attended to the calls of frugality, or the needful minuteness of painful economy ; for alas ! vanity and voluptuousness were the reins by which youth and inexperience were guided. Dissipation was followed by expence, expence by importunate distress. I applied to my father—he refused me succour ; reproach and anger ensued ; and, dreading the horrors of a prison, I fled from Germany, and paused not until I had reached Switzerland.

“ Pleased with the romantic and picturesque environs of Appenzel, I fixed my residence in an *auberge* ; and being a stranger, passed my time in admiring its various beauties.

“ One evening, as I wandered on the banks of the Sintra, now reflecting on past hours, now gazing with awful wonder on the high mountains by which the country is encom-

encompassed, I heard the soft strings of a guitar, swept with exquisite taste in a kind of symphony, and a moment after, accompanied by a female voice, which sweetly chanted the Sicilian mariner's hymn to the Virgin. The melancholy cadence penetrated my heart: I sighed as I paused to hear it; but the sound presently ceasing, broke the chain of romantic ideas with which it had inspired me. I gazed anxiously around, and beheld, a little to the left, half hid by the waving branches of the acacias and cypresses by which it was surrounded, a small stone temple. The rays of the setting sun diffused a rich tint over the prospect: the heads of the mountains appeared enveloped by the radiant clouds; and the serpentine stream of the Sintra, now lost in the sombre green of the forest—now, by the intervening juttings of the rocks, again peeping forth, reflected the sparkling beams upon its silver bosom.

“ Fearful of alarming the fair musician, I stole softly towards the temple. The
white

white blossoming myrtle, the passion tree's luxuriant tendril, and the fragrant eglantine, entwined around the fluted columns of the portico. I paused, for the door was open; and for the first time beheld the celestial Alexina. Her form was rather below the middle size; her complexion transparently fair; her features delicate and regular; while her large hazel eyes, beaming in sensibility, expressed every varying emotion of her soul: a tear trembled on the dark silken lashes which shaded them, and stole slowly down her cheek. She was habited in deep mourning: one polished arm held the guitar, whilst the other supported her head. She looked the representative of Reflection, to whom, from the inscription on the frieze, this temple was dedicated.

‘Blessed spirit of my sainted parent!’ she exclaimed, rising to depart; ‘beloved, regretted shade! freed from the pressure of mortality, thou readeth the heart of thy
Alexina,

Alexina, and traceth the source from whence her afflictions flow !'

" She slowly descended the steps ; and pursuing a rude path which wound round the side of the mountain, stopt at a neat white cottage, which entering, I lost sight of her. For some moments I hesitated whether to pursue my adventure, or to return to Appenzel ; but the love of novelty, and the desire of intrigue, subdued every other consideration. I entered the temple. The interior was light and elegant ; the walls were stuccoed ; and in a niche, upon a small pedestal, was placed a marble urn. The hilliatrope perfumed the air with its aromatic odour, and various other rare exotics blossomed in the windows. On the urn was this inscription—' Reflection ! man's best guide to peace, 'tis here I trace thee.' I took my pencil, and under it inscribed—' Love ! man's best guide to happiness, 'tis here, in the matchless form of Alexina, my heart imbibed thee.'

" I quitted

“ I quitted the temple, and musing on the fair heroine of my adventure, wandered through the garden. The same neat simplicity and elegance of taste prevailed; for the delicate hand of Alexina had taught the rich carnation to entwine around its supporting stick, and the fragrant rose to hang blushing on the downy bell of the modest lily. A clear stream, bursting from the side of the mountain, rolled bubbling down the declivity, and meandering through the garden, glided swiftly over its pebbly bed, and mingled with the waters of the Sintra. The sun had long since sunk from the face of the heavens, and the varied colours of the landscape, from the soft light of evening, appeared to melt into each other.

“ A stranger to the country, and fearful, from the gloom of night, of losing my way, and wandering alone among the mountains, I retraced the path, and entered Appenzel, with a mind tinctured with romance and Alexina.

“ On the second evening, at the same hour, I again approached the temple—again I beheld the beautiful recluse—and as I gazed, Love’s subtle arrow stole into my heart, and coloured it with new ideas, new sensations, new hopes. For the first time, I felt remorse for my youthful follies, and even shuddered at the past infamy of my proceedings. I sighed to commence, in the society of this interesting, this soul-subduing stranger, a new existence—to date from her affection the career of a refined sensibility. Even I—oh, strange and wondrous revolution!—felt timid—even I dreaded to alarm her by my presence, and suffered her to quit the garden without breathing into her ear the violence of my passion.

“ In my next ramble chance was more propitious to my wishes; for a few hundred yards from the temple, sporting on the Sintra’s flowery banks, I beheld a beautiful little dog. The animal ran playfully towards me, and when I stooped to fondle it,

it, returned my caresses like a caded favourite. I took it in my arms, and as I approached the temple, beheld the divine Alexina supporting the feeble steps of an elderly lady. As they descended the mountain, Alexina looked anxiously around, and not seeing the little object of her solicitude, called ‘Fidelle.’ The dog recognizing the voice of his mistress, struggled for freedom; but I retained him in my arms; and hastening into the garden, apologized for my intrusion, and presented the panting truant.

‘Ungrateful Fidelle!’ I exclaimed, as Alexina smilingly received him; ‘had I been blest with the favour of such a mistress, no alluring form, though decked like the gaudy butterfly, should have drawn me from the contemplation of her superior charms.’

“Alexina bowed gracefully, and a faint blush passed over her features. I accompanied them to the cottage. During the walk, we conversed on indifferent subjects;

and Alexina expressed so much elegance of sentiment, and brilliancy of wit, that if before I admired the beauty of her person, I now adored the captivating graces of her mind. With ill concealed regret I bade them adieu ; and ere I reached Appenzel, submitted myself a willing captive to the power of love.

“ From this period my visits to the cottage became long and frequent. I no longer thought of my father, my associates, or of Germany : the dwelling of Madame d'Erlack appeared to my infatuated imagination a second garden of Eden, and Alexina lovely and innocent as was our primeval parent, ere sin had implanted its scorpion fangs in her bosom. In the temple, when the restraints of formality were thrown aside, Alexina would touch the strings of her guitar, and chant the hymn with which my senses had been before entranced.

“ One evening, as I attentively listened to the soft strains of soothing harmony,
in

in the last stanza her voice faltered, and tears of remembrance and regret stole down her glowing cheek. I caught her hand—I gazed tenderly in her face.

‘Tell me from whence springs this emotion?’ I anxiously enquired.

“Her eyes rested on her mourning habit, and a heavy sigh burst from her bosom.

‘Ease my doubts, Alexina,’ I continued; ‘name the source of thy sorrows?’

‘I am an orphan,’ she replied; ‘alas! scarce three months have passed, since, by a fatal accident, I lost the best, the most indulgent of fathers. Often, in this temple, did he listen to the evening service to the Virgin! often increased the pleasure of the performance by his praise! But he is gone,’ she exclaimed, chasing the tears from her cheeks; ‘and when my aged aunt is summoned hence, death will not have left one friend to comfort the bereaved Alexina.’

“I looked stedfastly at her.

‘Not one friend, Alexina?’ I repeated.

‘She blushed, and her eyes sought the ground.’

‘Business occasioned my beloved father’s absence from Appenzel; and on his return, as he passed by the Couvercle, an avalanche, rolling down the side of the mountain, buried him and the guides in its fall; and many days passed ere we received the dreadful intelligence.’

‘Cannot thy heart admit of comfort?’ I enquired; ‘cannot thy reason subdue the violence of sorrow?’

‘Alas! you knew not my father,’ sobbed Alexina, and her head sunk upon her arm.

‘If thou was possessed of a valuable ring,’ I resumed, ‘and by accident dropped it in yonder shallow stream which waters the garden, thou wouldst seek it out—thou wouldst diligently persevere in thy researches, until thou hadst regained it: but if in the middle of the Atlantic it had fallen from thy finger, thou wouldst have acknowledged the effort vain, and have reconciled
thyself

thyself to thy loss as to a thing that was inevitable.'

'True,' observed Alexina, looking expectantly towards me.

'Thus then may we explain the metaphor,' I returned:—'Death is the ocean, suspense the stream; anxiety and hope hang upon the one, and as the ring, dropped in shallow water, it may be recovered and turned to joy. But when the grave has closed its ponderous jaws upon the tender friend of our bosom, as the ring fallen in the Atlantic, vain are our endeavours to recover the lost treasure, for not man's combined efforts can restore it.'

"Alexina listened unconvinced.

'Time,' she observed, 'was the only specific to heal the anguish of a sorrowing heart; for sublunary misery shrinks before it, as doth the foggy vapours at the rays of the all-cheering sun: by it, remembrance is weakened—by it, our feelings become insensibly less acute, and pain and uneasiness gradually diminish. In the moment

of affliction, the dictates of reason, the maxims of philosophy, are alike inefficacious; for time, the balm of despair, the medicine of woe, can alone yield us comfort, and soothe our murmurs into peace.'

"Whole pages could I fill, Rosalthe," continued Wilhelm, "were I to delineate the sentiments and virtues of this unfortunate, this matchless woman. But lest Hildebrand should return ere my story is concluded, I will pass over our marriage, the death of Madame d'Erlack, our removal from Appenzel, and return to Germany. It was at Dresden we fixed our residence—it was there my ill-starred destiny renewed my acquaintance with the Baron de Hoinsloft, one of my former associates.

"The modest graces, the unaffected simplicity, and incomparable beauty of Alexina, attracted his notice, and called forth his admiration. But he carefully concealed his prepossession under the mask of friendship, and with the politic artifices of a demon, without appearing to do so, sowed
the

the seeds of discord in the hearts of two beings, who till then breathed not a wish unknown to each other. Alexina, from the subtle poison of De Hoinsloft, lost her spirits; and instead of receiving me with smiles, would frequently sigh in my presence, would frequently gaze on me, until a tear forcing itself from her eye, would trickle unchecked down her cheek. The wily De Hoinsloft taught me to believe, that her sorrow proceeded from coldness and indifference—that her wavering heart, no longer acknowledging me its master, panted for freedom.

‘And who is the being who has rivalled me in the affections of my wife?’ I enquired.

‘Promise to smother every appearance of revenge, my dear Ludovic,’ replied De Hoinsloft, at least till the hour of conviction, and I will point him out.’

“I did so, and the virtuous d’Almaine, the long esteemed, long chosen friend of the devoted Alexina, was branded by the

infamous appellation of seducer. From this period my home became hateful; discontent lowered on my brow, and with difficulty I restrained myself from venting my fury on my guiltless wife, and reproaching her for her supposed ingratitude. Again I had recourse to dissipation, again I plunged into every enormity. The dictates of honour, the voice of compassion, were swallowed up in the vortex, and the intoxicating bowl and maddening revel absorbed every sensation.

“ One evening, as I returned from the gaming-table, I saw d’Almaine quit my house. Rage, heightened by the fumes of wine, subdued the faint efforts of reason; and drawing my sword, I stationed myself at a corner of the street; and when the defenceless d’Almaine approached, like a midnight assassin I rushed upon him, and sheathed it in his bosom. The effort was instantaneous; for no sooner did I hear his piercing groan, no sooner did I behold him weltering at my feet, than horror chilled

chilled my blood, and with the fear of guilt I fled. Every sound reached my heart; I thought not of Alexina, or of the sufferings of d'Almaine—I thought alone of my own safety, of quitting Dresden, of escaping the emissaries of justice, and the darkness of night favoured my design. I fled from Saxony, but not from reflection—I fled from personal danger, but not from despair: the phantoms of past happiness perpetually haunted me; the possibility of Alexina's innocence, and of De Hoinsloft's treachery, for the first time darted across my brain, and filled my tortured bosom with doubt and anguish. In the darkness of night, the shade of the murdered d'Almaine flitted before me, and every pang which conscience could inflict revenged the wrongs of Alexina.

“Days, weeks, and months passed slowly away. My mind was not made for inactivity. I longed to return to Dresden, to unravel at once the thread of my sorrows—I longed again to behold Alexina, and

if rich in virtue, to intreat her forgiveness, to forswear my errors, and on my knees beseech her to accompany me in the exile which the supposed murder of d'Almaine rendered necessary. Rage yielded to tenderness; and when imagination retraced the moment which presented the interesting mourner to my view, love, in all its fervour, repossessed my heart, and tinged with new-born hope every succeeding idea.

“ Carefully disguising myself, I commenced my journey, and reached the rolling Elbe towards the close of evening. My heart beat high as I gazed on the environs of Dresden; and when I found myself in the town, the spontaneous tear trembled in my eye, and my lips inwardly murmured ‘Alexina!’

“ Fatigued and uneasy, I entered an *auberge*; and shrinking from the observation of every casual glance, retired to a corner of the apartment. A stranger entered. I looked up, and in an instant recognized

3 d'Almaine.

d'Almaine. Astonishment and joy prevented utterance: I rushed towards him—I grasped his arm—I looked intently in his face. He shuddered—he trembled—he turned hastily away; and articulating my name, fled precipitately from the chamber. Maddened with agony and suspense, I rushed after him. Alexina, lost to me for ever—lost to innocence—a prey to guilt and anguish, flitted across my brain; and when I overtook him in the street, gasping for breath, I seized him by the collar.

‘Think not to evade me, d’Almaine,’ I exclaimed, ‘nor steal like a coward from an explanation. Where is Alexina? where is the being whom once I called my wife?’

‘Avaunt with idle threats, Ludovic!’ coldly replied d’Almaine; ‘this is no time for words. Alexina is no longer an inhabitant of Dresden.’

‘Where is she? direct me to her retreat—I will, I must behold her.’

‘Never

‘Never more will she behold thee,’ solemnly rejoined d’Almaine; ‘never more will thy unkindness, thy ingratitude harm her.’

‘To what spot hast thou conveyed thy victim?’ I demanded, still ignorant of his allusion, ‘that thou thinkest to hide her from me? Say, infamous, vile seducer! My love turns to hate as my eyes rest upon thee. Once hast thou escaped me; but when next my sword is unsheathed, tremble, for it shall stamp my vengeance deep in thy perjured heart.’

‘Mistaken, unhappy being!’ murmured d’Almaine, pausing at the door of a mean looking house.

“He passed his arm through mine—he endeavoured to force me into the passage, but struggling, I started back.

‘For what purpose, and whither art thou taking me?’ I enquired, in a voice of doubt: ‘Hast thou turned assassin, d’Almaine? hast thou inveigled me to this dreary, this suspicious

picious spot, to effectually silence my reproaches?’

‘Fear not, Ludovic,’ replied d’Almaine, ‘this house contains a form whose matchless beauty the whole world might admire.’

‘Beauty has lost its influence,’ I disdainfully exclaimed; ‘though warm, tender, captivating—though capable of beguiling me of my cares, and snatching me from the opening depths of perdition, yet would I spurn it from me, and welcome in its stead the rapture of revenge.’

‘It is a form,’ rejoined d’Almaine, ascending the staircase, ‘which once might have beguiled care.’

‘Once!’ I repeated; ‘then ’tis the ruins of a face I am to contemplate.’

‘It is,’ replied d’Almaine, ‘but not from age; for scarce has she attained her nineteenth summer. But enter, and behold conviction; enter Ludovic,’ throwing open the door, ‘and behold the victim of man’s cruelty.’

“Ah God! never shall I forget the
scene

scene which presented itself! In a dark confined room, near the window, upon trestles, stood a plain black coffin: the lid was thrown off, and I beheld my once idolized, my wedded Alexina, cold and stiff, in the dreary habiliments of the grave. Sensation, life, strength, seemed to fail me: I staggered a few paces, and uttering a heavy groan, fell motionless by the shrouded form.

“ Many days elapsed ere recollection was restored me; my numbed faculties laboured under the torpor of despair; and during the period of my illness, I experienced the heavy weight which oppresses the mind, when waking under the influence of a horrid dream.

“ D’Almaine, animated by the most disinterested friendship, watched over me, listened to my ravings, and endeavoured to restore me to peace; but the wound was too deep, and my stricken heart was unable to requite the offices of his affection. From him I learnt the treachery of
De

De Hoinsloft—from him I learnt that Alexina, reduced through my extravagance to penury, from the hour of my desertion had quitted her house, and taking an obscure lodging, had sunk the victim of a premature decay, and in her last moments of existence, had blessed my name, and prayed for happiness upon me.

“ As soon as returning strength would admit, I hastened from Dresden, and without a pursuit, travelled many a weary league. I seemed to be flying from despair, but alas! the serpent too closely compressed my heart, and the more I struggled for freedom, the more it defied my endeavours. The cold lap of earth afforded me a resting-place, and the heavy dews of night fell on my defenceless head. Hope, the pleasing flame which tinges with joy the dreary pilgrimage of life, was extinguished; for like the premature bud of the rose withering amidst the acuteness of the frosty air, it had shot forth its rays in
the

the days of happiness, and vanished in the hour of enjoyment.

“ The sun had lengthened the shadows of the mountains, when I paused at the entrance of a forest; for the calm and romantic scene which presented itself, stole even my mind from the contemplation of its sorrows. I gazed around—my eyes rested on the antique turrets of St. Florensia, and from thence on the neighbouring ruins of its chapel. My disposition was not formed for contemplation, but imperceptibly it wandered to the past hours of its prosperity.

“ The shrill voice of a peasant driving his goats down the green slope of the mountain, dissipated my reflections. The sound was discordant to my ears; I wished to shun my fellow-creatures—to shun the intercourse of the world, and all its delusive pursuits. I turned precipitately from the sea-girt prospect, and rushed into the thickest part of the forest. I had proceeded

ceeded but a short distance, when the sound of voices again reached my ear: I paused, but ere I could escape the intruders, Hildebrand and part of his troop surrounded me. Their dress, their manners, spoke their occupation; and when death from their hands appeared inevitable, shuddering with the cowardice of guilt, I clung to the vile possession of life.

“ They accosted me with—‘ Whither art thou hastening, fellow-traveller?’

‘ Any where—to the world’s extremity,’ I replied, ‘ where fortune points, and desperation leads.’

‘ Sayest thou so, my friend?’ observed Hildebrand, smiling; ‘ ’tis a long journey: what may be the pursuit?’

‘ Peace.’

‘ And art thou sure it will not slip through thy grasp?’ continued the Bandit.

‘ In search of peace!’ interrupted Otho, with a contemptuous sneer; ‘ take care, my brave fellow, thou dost not find it like the will-o’-the-wisp, whose demoniac flame
skimming.

skimming o'er bogs and pools, mocks the night wanderer with the prospect of rest, and when' almost attained, when panting like him thou art prepared to clasp it, thou art swallowed up in the deep morass, and, with hope, resigneth peace and life together.'

' 'Tis a pity,' observed Cuthbert, ' that thy youth should wear away in the pursuit, or, like a woman, thou shouldst sink beneath disappointment. Now, my lad, is the moment of triumph: the world has used thee scurvily; inlist under our banner, and for thy motto take *revenge*.'

' Revenge! revenge!' echoed from every mouth.

" My voice was drowned in the clangor, and triumphantly they bore me to the cavern. In the short space of an hour the oath of unanimity and secrecy was administered; and my once glowing hopes and brilliant prospects were concentrated in the life of a robber."

CHAP. VI.

TOWARDS the close of the third day, the Baron, attended by a physician of the first eminence, drove into the court-yard of Lunenberg Castle. Still did the horses foam with the lash of the whip—still did they blow and pant from excessive driving.

“How is my son?” enquired the Baron, as he rushed from the carriage—his countenance was pale from fatigue, and his form trembled with agitation. “Say, good Viola, may I believe my hopes? may I encourage the pleasing prospect of again beholding him in health? of again beholding him happy?”

“All

"All things are possible with God," observed Viola.

The Baron tottered a few paces, and sank powerless on a chair.

"Alas! what have I done?" said the terrified Viola, attempting to quit the room for the purpose of procuring assistance—"my unguarded folly has filled the heart of my lord with sorrow and affliction."

"Do not leave me," feebly articulated the Baron.

Viola again approached, and waited in silence the commands of her lord.

"Let the gentleman who accompanied me from Dresden," resumed the Baron, "be immediately conducted to my son's apartment; and tell him, a distracted father awaits the result of his visit with a mind bordering on agony."

Viola

Viola quitted the chamber, and the Baron, agitated with alternate hope and fear, listened to her retreating steps; and, as the fancied knell of expectation, when silence reigned around, hid his face in his hands, and burst into a flood of tears.

“Dire prediction!—Ill-fated Rosalthe!—Dear beloved Adelbert!”—he faintly murmured.—“Misjudging severity!—Blind and mistaken being!—Had I yielded to the voice of nature, had I resisted the stubborn impulse of pride, I might now have been blessed with the affection of two dutiful children—might have witnessed the happiness of thee, my injured Adelbert, and thy chosen, thy matchless Rosalthe. But now darkness and despair will be my portion; for should I lose thee, should the sun of my hopes set in death, thy wretched father will live alone for remorse and woe. Still, still must suspense consume me,” he continued, listening at the foot of the stairs—“the deep silence of the grave prevails,
and

and thy voice, oh my Adelbert! my tender suffering son! reaches not my ear. Ah God, perhaps he cannot speak!" swiftly passing up the stairs—"perhaps the cold hand of death already presses on his heart—perhaps his condensed and powerless eyes are closed in a heavy stupor."

He reached the door—he paused—he listened—his breath was short and convulsed—his heart beat high with anguish—he leant against the wall—still no sound proceeded from the interior of the apartment. Trembling with apprehension, and unable longer to sustain the torture of doubt, he softly opened the door, and slid unperceived into the chamber. The eyes of the Count were closed in a heavy slumber; the hectic flush of fever had vanished, and his countenance wore the pallid livery of the grave—his pulse was short and intermitting, and the feeble powers of respiration alone declared that he lived. The Baron threw himself on his knees—
he

he hid his face on the bed—he wept in the agony of sorrow—he reproached himself for the mistaken harshness of his conduct—praised the constancy and persevering affection of his son, and vowed, in the bitterness of his heart, should Adelbert be restored to his prayers, and Rosalthe to her suffering parents, no longer to oppose an union founded on esteem and love, but to receive her as his daughter, as the wife of his honours' heir, as the future Baroness de Lunenberg.

But, alas! Adelbert knew not the affliction of his father—sorrow had ceased to wound, and even the beloved name of Rosalthe was unheeded. Four hours had passed since the violence of distraction had yielded to this alarming lethargy—since hope had fled from the breast of Viola, and the momentary expectation of the dissolution of the Count had succeeded. The doctor in awful silence watched every symptom of his patient, and, notwithstanding the fa-

tigue of travelling, through the night continued his station by the bedside. His expectations rested on the state in which the Count might awake; and, as he strictly enjoined stillness, the unhappy Baron, unable to suppress his sobs, returned to the lower apartment. But though harrassed in body, and distressed in mind, he could not calm his spirits sufficiently to partake of rest, and the night slowly passed in pacing his chamber, now with his hands, his heart uplifted to Heaven—now pale, trembling, struggling with extreme agitation, and wiping away the swoln tears as they rolled fast down his cheek,

“Oh, Power of mercy!” he exclaimed, “save the son and take the father! Graciously accept my life as a ransom for his! Age has bleached my temples, and the energies of youth are fled; I may steal into the grave, and the world will not miss me—but my son, my beloved boy, whose maturity has realised the infant buddings
of

of virtue, may become an ornament to his country, a blessing to his fellow-creatures."

The dawn of day now peeped from the east, and the chirping of the birds broke the profound silence which reigned. Again the Baron listened at the foot of the staircase, and again he returned to the apartment. A heavy drowsiness hung upon his eyelids, and in vain he endeavoured to resist its power—fear and anxiety yielded to the weakness of nature, and, sinking on a sofa, for a few hours he lost the recollection of his trouble.

In the morning Adelbert opened his eyes, and, turning them feebly on Viola, articulated her name. The powers of reason were restored—no longer did they glare with insanity, or fix on unmeaning vacancy. Though powerless from excessive langour, he knew those around him, and extended his hand to his father, with a

pleasure extreme and painful. He wished to speak of Rosalthe, but he knew not how; thrice he attempted to pronounce her name, and thrice his voice faltered.

“Do not agitate yourself, my beloved Adelbert,” said the Baron, tenderly pressing his hand. “I know and lament the fatal source of your afflictions—but if ever your father, if ever your sister were dear to you, for their sakes compose your spirits, and endeavour to recover your health.”

The Count faintly sighed—his heart whispered—“What is health without happiness?” and again his thoughts rested on Rosalthe.

The active energies of youth, and the powers of a naturally strong constitution, did more towards the restoration of Adelbert than the healing balm of medicine, or the skilful prescriptions of physicians;
and

and in the course of a few days, though still enfeebled, he was enabled to leave his bed and receive the congratulations of the family. But still a heavy weight oppressed his spirits—still his heart laboured with the pangs of sorrow. He retraced the mysterious occurrences of the fatal night of his arrival at the castle—he thought of the disappearance of Rosalthe, till regret turned to anguish, dejection to despair.

“And are thus my visions of bliss, my prospects of happiness closed?” he would exclaim. “Oh, Rosalthe, seen but to be admired, known but to be adored, should the span of my existence linger into years, never will thy tenderness, thy innocence, thy virtues, be effaced from my memory—I will cherish them deep in my heart—I will live for the pleasing contemplation—I will visit those haunts endeared by remembrance—I will kneel on the stone which has often sustained thee—I will water with my tears the steps of the broken

altar: 'twas there that stern duty compelled thee to resist my supplications—'twas there with blushing cheeks and averted eyes thou listened to my ardent prayers, and taught me the obedience of a son. Short are the moments of youth! Short are the hours of life! Oh, Rosalthe, cruel in thy affection, severe in thy decision, hadst thou yielded to my arguments—hadst thou received my vows—hadst thou by strong and indissoluble ties united thy lot to mine, how transporting would have been my fate, how permanent my felicity! No corroding cares would have taken root in my heart—no terrifying doubts, no agonizing apprehensions, would have tinged with despair the future hours of my existence. But now, Hope, like a shadow, flies from before my face, Peace herself is no more, and Happiness, from the cruel sport of Destiny, is no longer within my reach."

Dusseldorf, acquainted with the convalescent state of the Count, repaired to
Lunenberg

Lunenberg Castle, for the purpose of breathing the congratulations of his heart. But, alas! joy was inimical to his feelings; he thought of Rosalthe, and though he felt thankful for the restoration of Adelbert, yet his lips refused to articulate an accent of pleasure; and when he stood before him, he could only bow, for his swoln eyes and colourless cheeks declared what passed within.

Adelbert grasped his hand, and, alike softened by recollection, pointed to a chair and turned hastily away; at length recovering, he looked fearfully towards him—"Have you heard aught of Rosalthe?" he faintly articulated, "or does the same dreadful mystery prevail?"

"Alas, it does, my Lord!" replied Dusseldorf—"still is her fate involved in doubt—still is my mind a prey to anguish."

Adelbert, breathing an exclamation of horror, rested his head upon his hand.

“It is now eight days,” resumed Dusseldorf, “since the fatal night of her disappearance, and still have we no clue to guide us in our search.”

“Ah God, perhaps Rosalthe is dead!” interrupted Adelbert, shuddering at the suggestion—“perhaps the roses which blossomed on her cheeks are faded—perhaps the ruby which adorned her lips is turned white—perhaps the radiant brightness of her eyes, which once rendered her dangerous to behold, are veiled in the shrouded stillness of the grave.”

“Ah no!” sighed Dusseldorf, “I fear Rosalthe still suffers—if I knew her dead I could be more reconciled, for then our tears would be but selfish—for then suspense could no longer aggravate our sorrows.”

Adelbert shuddered.—“What mean you?” he eagerly enquired.

Dusseldorf then repeated the relation of Father Anselmo; and Adelbert, maddened

dened with the new sensations which sprung in his bosom, struck his hand upon his forehead and precipitately paced the chamber.

“Young and handsome!” he repeated, after a pause—“tender and sentimental!—Oh, Rosalthe! Rosalthe! perhaps, breathed in the accents of persuasion, he pours forth his tale at your feet—perhaps, gazing on your charms, he dares to sue your love—perhaps he touches your snowy hand—perhaps——Ah Heavens, presumptuous wretch!” and his eyes darted the fresh kindling flames of jealousy. “Would I could meet him—would I could tear from his treacherous heart the secret of Rosalthe’s detention!”

“Why so agitated, Adelbert?” enquired the Baron as he entered the apartment—“I fear I must lay an embargo on your conversation, at least till your strength equals your spirit.”

Dusseldorf rose to depart.

“Hast thou received any intelligence of thy daughter?” he continued, addressing the veteran.

“Alas! no, my Lord,” he replied, while a cloud of sorrow, which excessive anxiety could alone suggest, which a sympathizing bosom could alone feel, overspread his countenance; “the same fearful mystery hides her from our sight—the same painful apprehension preys upon our quiet.”

“I have received intelligence agonizing as unexpected,” exclaimed Adelbert—“intelligence worse than death—intelligence which drives me to madness. I have a rival, my father. Nay, start not——”

“A rival!” repeated the Baron, gazing proudly on his son; “and does thy heart meanly contend with a rival? Break the disgraceful chain which holds it—suffer not thy reason to be warpt by the artful insinuations of beauty—remember what is due to thy dignity, thy family, thy honour,

nor, by a blind pursuance, sink the slave of passion."

"You mistake me, my Lord," rejoined the Count; "I have a rival, but not in the heart of Rosalthe—pure as infant slumbers, she knows not guile—she gave me, with her love, her confidence—superior to the light arts of many of her sex, she sought not to steal my affections, or to undermine my duty—she resisted my ardent wishes, my supplications—she struggled against the dictates of her own feelings—she refused her hand, the precious boon which on my knees I sued for, because I had a father—because she had pride—because that father denied his concurrence—because that pride spurned at clandestinely sharing a name which supposed superiority withheld."

"Supposed superiority," repeated the Baron.

Dusseldorf trembled, and a momentary scarlet tinged his cheek; he remembered

the discovery which, in the agony of his feelings, on the night of Rosalthe's disappearance, he had disclosed; and now looked towards the Count with the fearful gaze of expectation.

"One secret, and only one," pursued Adelbert, "Rosalthe retained, for which, to her supposed father I am indebted."

The Baron uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"She is not the being she would seem," he continued—"she is not the offspring of a cottager—she is not the daughter of the virtuous Dusseldorf."

"Prophetic powers!" ejaculated the Baron.

"She is the child of mystery," returned the Count, "and her fate—her name—her very existence, is hid by the impenetrable veil of destiny."

Dusseldorf

Dusseldorf then recited the fearful horrors of the night which ushered her, cold and defenceless, into his protection; and ended with detailing the agitation betrayed by the lady abbess of St. Florensia, at the sight of the bracelet which encircled the wrist of the expiring mother of Rosalthe, and the portentous packet, now at the convent, marked by the mystic interdiction, which to this distant period, by rendering the seal sacred, had left the fate of the orphan to guess at.

“ ’Tis strange,” said the Baron, after an interesting pause.

Adelbert folded his arms, and gazed silently on his father.

“ I will go to the convent,” resumed the Baron; “ I will acquaint the lady abbess with the account I have received, and will request her confidence; and if my interest

or

or fortune can reinstate the orphan in her rights, she may command them."

"Forbear, my Lord," implored the agitated Dusseldorf—"through the force of sorrow I have betrayed my trust. When I received Rosalthe to my care, I vowed to preserve the secret—I vowed to pass her to the world as my child, and never, whilst the Baron de Lindenthal existed, to acknowledge the deception."

"Holy Heaven, the Baron de Lindenthal! 'tis as I suspected," interrupted Adelbert, sinking powerless on a chair.

"The abbess told me," continued Dusseldorf, "as I valued the safety, as I valued the life of my charge, to persevere in the disguise. For eighteen years silence has sealed my lips—for eighteen years the secret has been carefully preserved; and now, foolish and inconsiderate, thrown off my guard, in a moment of anguish I have disclosed all—I have justly merited the displeasure of the lady abbess—I have exposed

posed my heart's-darling to danger, perhaps to death."

"Fear not, Dusseldorf," said the Baron, "the tale shall not be divulged—the secret shall remain sacred in my bosom, until the prescribed moment for elucidating the mystery."

Dusseldorf murmured his thanks, his heart was too full for utterance, and he turned to the window to conceal the spontaneous tear which started to his eye.

Adelbert followed him, he grasped his hand—"Rosalthe, my excellent, my worthy friend," he exclaimed, "shall ever be thy daughter, shall ever be thy dutiful affectionate child. If Heaven should kindly restore her to our prayers—if in her I should clasp the rich treasure of my hopes, thou shalt likewise possess a son, whose zeal and attachment to the guardians of his Rosalthe's infancy shall continue through life—shall terminate but in existence."

Dusseldorf,

Dusseldorf, overcome by the great and unexpected condescension of the Count, bowed upon his hand, and raised his eyes in silent gratitude to Heaven.

“But, my father,” exclaimed Adelbert, eagerly addressing the Baron, “are there no means by which we can realize the picture? are there no means of rescuing from confinement the trembling prisoner, and bringing to condign punishment the inhuman ravisher?”

“I fear not,” replied the Baron; “even suspicion marks not an object, how then can we discover the thief?”

Adelbert clasped his hands and sighed.

“Yield not to despair, my dear boy,” resumed the Baron; “if Rosalthe is pure and innocent as thy heart pictures—if she is deserving of thy love—if she returns thy affection——”

“If I thought Rosalthe instigated by the
sordid

sordid impulse of interest," interrupted Adelbert—"if I thought she breathed a sigh tinged by another object, dear as she is to my soul, I would tear her from it, I would cast her like a worthless weed away."

"You know her not, my Lord," exclaimed Dusseldorf, anxious to vindicate his beloved child; "Rosalthe's heart is the seat of virtue, of humility, piety, and honour—never did the hopes of ambition—never did the power of riches agitate her gentle bosom, or for a moment possess her mind; for, until love," looking reproachfully towards the Count, "mingled with her sensations, she sought for happiness in a cottage—and she found it."

"Think not I doubt it," warmly replied Adelbert; "securely resting on the constancy of my Rosalthe, would I pledge my life as an hostage for her purity; but fear, my friend, for the time realizes distress, and my mind, agonized by her mysterious disappearance, varies with each succeeding moment,

moment, and clings to each revolving doubt."

"If Rosalthe is perfect as appearances promise," observed the Baron, "Providence, which has already rescued her from imminent danger, will not forsake her in the hour of trial; still will its overhanging mercy defend her; and as in infancy it upheld her through the storm, so when her virtue has resisted the whispers of vice, and the allurements of temptation, will it be no less conspicuous in rewarding the strength and ardour of her perseverance. Trust me, Adelbert, the cloud which now hangs threatening overhead will yet disperse, light will issue out of darkness, and joy will arise from despair. Happiness will be thine, for duty shall no longer thwart the impulse of affection. Should Rosalthe return—should the perplexities of doubt vanish—should she prove worthy of thy invaluable heart, I will receive her as my daughter—as the wife of my Adelbert—as the sister of my Angela; and the
united

united efforts of our family shall be to obliterate her past uneasiness, to promote her future bliss. Say, my son, does the project accord with thy feelings?"

Adelbert, scarce believing what he heard, struggling with the tide of love, gratitude, delight, and apprehension, which, rushing to his heart, checked the power of utterance, threw his arms around his father, and hid his warm tears in his bosom.

CHAP. VII.

AS Wilhelm concluded his story, the sounding of the horn announced the return of the Bandit, and in another instant the door flying open, Hildebrand, glowing with exultation, rushed to the feet of Rosalthe.

“I am come to claim the reward of my forbearance,” he exclaimed, “to reap the golden harvest which a tenacious priest has so obstinately withheld. Come, my chosen love, a monk less scrupulous than Friar Lawrence waits us in the outer cavern. Come,” gently forcing her towards
the

the door, "for bliss cannot reach the heart of Hildebrand, until he hails thee the *Bandit's Bride*. What, still reluctant?" seeing Rosalthe pale, and panting for breath; "must I force thee into joy? Perverse girl! thus to requite my impatience—thus to requite my love! but by this kiss I swear——"

Rosalthe started back; desperation gave her strength; she shrunk from the encircling arms of Hildebrand, and rushed horror-struck to the farther extremity of the apartment. Rage chased from the manly countenance of the chief the softened smile with which he had addressed her.

"Rosalthe!" he exclaimed, in a loud and threatening voice, "beware lest my vengeance should be awakened—beware lest Love himself should resign the conflict."

Rosalthe heard him not, neither did she
see

see his approach; for ere he reached the spot on which she stood, the cavern receded from her view, and she sunk on its hard surface, deprived of sense and motion. Soon was the agony of recollection restored—soon was she recalled to life; but alas! it was but *a change of pain severer for severe*. She raised her mild eyes to Heaven.

“The wife of Hildebrand!” she mentally murmured; “the wife of a Bandit! Ah, Adelbert, why art thou not here to save me? Shield me, Father of mercy! and thou, soft spirit of my angel mother! hover o’er thy child—guard her innocence—save her from violence and distraction!”

“Rosalthe,” said the Bandit, seizing her hand, and impelling her forward, “time wears away; soon will the troop return to the cavern. I adore thee; my soul is true as the needle to the pole. Pity a heart so cruelly tortured—a heart in which thou hast no partner—which, till it beheld thee,
never

never felt the transports of a real affection. What, still silent!" pressing her snowy hand to his lips; "can cruelty be compatible with such transcendant beauty? can a being formed to communicate happiness, exult only in inflicting torment?"

"If my esteem, my regard, is worth the possession," faintly articulated Rosalthe, "now is the moment to ensure it; convince me that thy love is disinterested—convince me that my peace is worth a consideration—let me return to St. Florenzia. Nay, look not so terrible: my heart may be softened by thy generosity; thy affection, thy sufferings will ever be before my eyes, and pity may soften into love. Say," she fervently continued, her features glowing with the expectation, "wilt thou grant my prayer? wilt thou release thy prisoner? wilt thou restore her to peace?"

"And should that cold insensible heart retain its indifference," enquired the Bandit, struggling to repress every appearance
of

of displeasure, "what may be the result of my expectations?"

"Self-approbation," resumed Rosalthe, "and the assurance that the austerities of a cloister shall bury me from the eyes of the world—shall be the only rival to thy affections."

Hildebrand shook his head.

"Thou art too deeply rooted here," laying his hand on his breast, "to expect the sacrifice. Before I knew it, I loved thee; the charms of thy person captivated my senses, and my heart harboured not one plea to oppose to the sweet attraction. No, Rosalthe, never shalt thou be a nun—never shall the gloomy walls of a convent contain so bright a jewel."

He snatched her to his bosom; he conveyed her struggling to the outer cavern. A priest indeed waited; but oh! how different to Father Lawrence! By him the
sacred

sacred order was disgraced—by him the holy functions of religion were abused: humanity dwelt not in his heart, humility graced not his brow. His eyes were full of fire, but not the fire of devotion; his forehead was furrowed with many a wrinkle; his cheeks were flushed, but not with the roses of temperance.

“This is the proud spirit I would wish to humble,” said the Bandit, addressing the priest, and forcibly detaining Rosalthe. “Perform the ceremony, holy father; give me a right to demand obedience, and this night thou mayest depart, for liberty and life shall be thy recompence. The voice of joy shall resound throughout; my associates shall share the rapture of their chief, and partake of the delights of revelry. Come, Rosalthe, banish this cast of care; let me not see discontent or melancholy pervade the countenance of my bride.”

Rosalthe, agitated by a thousand varied passions, looked fearfully towards the monk; but his eyes beamed not one symptom of compassion. Racked with the torture of suspense, he wished to ensure his own safety; and though that safety had led through the heart of the innocent victim before him, yet would he not have scrupled in securing it.

Rosalthe's cheeks were bleached with terror: her form trembled—her eyes were filled with tears—her clasped hands were raised to Heaven; for there lay “grief's sharpest thorn hard pressing at her breast.” She sunk upon her knees; she entreated for mercy; she uttered shrieks of distraction and horror; but the friar, thoughtful of his own interest, commenced the ceremony.

Springing from the arms of Hildebrand, Rosalthe dashed the open book from his hand: she threw her arms around him; she looked wildly in his face.

“ If

“ If the joys of Heaven are desirable,” she exclaimed, “ if the pangs of hell are to be dreaded, save a wretched creature from ruin and dishonour. Oh thou!” she continued, as with convulsed agitation she raised her streaming eyes, “ thou who beholdest my misery, soften the hearts of my persecutors! distribute mercy to them, as thou wilt show mercy in their latest moments!”

Hildebrand frowned, and encircling his arm around her waist, held her with a steady grasp. The friar hastily recovered his book, and once more commenced the awful ceremony; but scarce had he concluded—scarce had the fatal badge glittered on the finger of Rosalthe—scarce had he pronounced her the *Bandit's Bride*, when Otho, with his sword still reeking in blood, rushed into the cavern.

“ To arms! to arms!” echoed through the intricate windings of the rocks. Ro-

salthe, terrified and dismayed, hung trembling upon the arm of a sofa; whilst Hildebrand, grasping his sword, and imprecating curses on the interruption, snatched a rude kiss from the pallid lips of his bride, and followed by the remainder of the troop, precipitately quitted the cavern.

Immediately the loud clangor of war, the discordant preparations for battle, ceased; and silence, drear and heavy, hung on all around. The conscience-stricken Bianca shrunk at the threatened danger; for the guilty soul, like the feeble reed on the river's brink, yielding to each succeeding blast, has not one single support to weather the tempest of misfortune. She wept—she breathed the most impious, the most unavailing regrets—and vowed, in the anguish of her heart, never to outlive the destruction of the banditti.

Far different were the ideas of Rosalthe. With horror she turned from the graceless
object

object before her; but pity mingled in her sensations; and when she retired to her own apartment, she supplicated the great, all-searching Father of Heaven to chasten the heart of the aged sinner, and turn it to repentance. Let not thy mind, oh man! inflicted with calamity, shrink beneath the pressure! Let not thy heart, struggling with endurance, indulge a complaining murmur! Remember the dark recesses of fate are not to be fathomed by the human eye—remember that the secret workings of Providence are not to be laid open for our inspection! Trust ever in the Being, who, for wise ends, raises the rapid whirlwind, and tears up by the roots the hardy oaks of the forest—who rends the globe with his earthquakes, and depopulating whole cities, buries thousands in the bosom of the earth. Reflect upon his power—resign thy heart to his decrees—suffer not thy tongue to arraign his wisdom, or for a moment question the immutable mandates of destiny!

Rosalthe carefully secured the door of her chamber; and as she fearfully gazed around the apartment, the recollection of the trap-door through which the letters of Wilhelm had been conveyed, darted like a ray from Heaven athwart her disordered brain. Instantly did she remove the carpet—instantly did she apply her feeble strength to raise it; but long did it resist her efforts—long did it mock her with the prospect of liberty. At length it yielded to her perseverance. She tore it open, and bending eagerly forward, a dark narrow passage presented itself to her view. She seized the lamp, and pressing her light form through the entrance, regardless of the heavy damps and fetid air, boldly proceeded. Hope beat high around her heart; and as she pursued the dreary path, Fancy's pleasing visions danced before her eyes. She hailed it as a portentous harbinger of returning peace, and raised her full heart in thankfulness to
Heaven,

Heaven, glowing with gratitude for her Redeemer's mercies.

The lamp emitted but a feeble light; for the noxious vapours played around it, and ever and anon threatened to extinguish the half-expiring flame. Rosalthe undaunted pressed forward; for though in the deep bowels of the earth, death in its most horrid form had threatened her, yet would she have preferred it to returning to the power of the Bandit. Gradually the passage opened, and at length terminated in a high extensive cavern. Brilliant was the scene, for the arched roof, hung with water petrified into clear crystal, reflected the lamp's renovated blaze with a thousand different tints, and like the costly diamond sparkled in obscurity.

Rosalthe paused for a moment; but the remembrance of her situation suffered not the indulgence of admiration, and again she quickly proceeded. Soon was her

passage barred by the extremity of the cavern; but alas! no sun's enlivening ray penetrated the gloom—no opening prospect revived her drooping spirits—the same dreary scene spread itself before her, and the echo of her steps like thunder died in distance. But even in this emergency her courage was not subdued: the dingy toad unheeded spit its venom, and the speckled adder hissed malignantly from its hiding-place. The wind howled through the subterraneous windings, and its hollow murmurs sounded in her ear, like the dismal yell of the wolf, pressed by hunger in the winter-stript recesses of the forest.

“ Alas!” she exclaimed, as she rested despondently against one of the huge masses of stones, which ages back, from the concussions of nature, had rolled from the sides of the cavern, “ no prospect of escape presents itself, and Hope's deceitful rays have closed in despair. This must be
my

my grave: here, forlorn and comfortless, my aching head will press a stony pillow, and the last agonizing sighs of my heart will breathe unembalmed by the tear of sympathy—no affectionate hand will close my wearied eyes, or calm the last expiring struggles of nature. Alas! dear and revered Dusseldorf! excellent, tender Agatha! never wilt thou learn the fate of thy child—never more smile upon her with endearing affection. Oh merciful and righteous Heaven!” she continued, softened into tears, “calm my last moments, and enable my more than parents to bear my loss with composure.”

A thousand instances of their love and their indulgence recurred to her memory; but they were only so many remembrances of her own wretched state—were only so many aggravations of her present misery.

“In a little time and this warm heart will cease to beat,” she mournfully continued;

rued; “in a little time, tenderly cherished Adelbert, and even thy loved form will fade from memory—in a little time, and the pulse of life will no longer palpitate: sorrow’s self will have ceased to wound, and fear and anguish will alike be powerless.”

She reflected from infancy upon the various vicissitudes of her life—she sought to penetrate the veil of mystery which obscured her fate—she thought of the deep interest which the Lady Abbess so frequently had expressed—she thought of her murdered father, her persecuted mother—but the magnet, the too endearing, too attractive magnet, centred every idea in one, and again her lips murmured the name of Adelbert. She raised her white hand to her forehead; her eyes rested on the fatal pledge of her marriage with Hildebrand—she started—she shuddered—pale with agitation, she drew it from her finger, and cast it indignantly on the earth.

“Am

“Am I,” she faintly articulated, after a pause of agony, “ah God! am I the *Bandit's Bride*? Lost, unhappy Rosalthe! why shouldst thou wish to live? why shouldst thou wish to escape from this cavern? why shouldst thou wish to drag to the retreat of innocence a load of grief and woe? to survive the day which closes the glowing prospects of thy sanguine heart—which renders criminal and pernicious thy early cherished, early requited love? But can a ceremony, compulsory and tyrannic, bend the free-born mind? can it colour the thread of destiny? can it be registered in Heaven? No, no, justice, mercy, shudders at the suggestion; but on earth—I am married,” groaned Rosalthe, and her hands, clasped in the agony of despair, dropped the lamp.

The flame shot dimly for a moment, but ere she could stoop to regain it, hissing with the damp moisture of the earth, it

was extinguished ; and the total darkness which succeeded filled her with dismay. Trembling at the consequences of her imprudence, she hid her face in her hands, and her tortured bosom vented itself in sobs.

“ Why should I tremble at the approach of darkness ? ” she exclaimed, as recollection and firmness returned ; “ from whence proceeds these horrors ? why is my soul possessed with them ? is it the bias of education, or the weakness of human nature ? Oh, holy and eventful Power ! who once sealed the lion’s ravenous jaws, and snatched thy faithful servants from the fury of consuming flames, open to me a passage, direct me in this moment of impending fate, and shield me with the all-powerful influence of thy mercy ! ”

Every superstitious dread vanished instantly from her mind ; she gazed stedfastly

ly around, and beheld, at the farther end of the cavern, a ray of light shining through a crevice in the vaulted roof.

“Do I again behold the glorious sunbeams?” exclaimed Rosalthe, in a voice of joy; “oh blissful, blissful sight! welcome, as is the promised port to the tempest-beaten mariner! Murmur not, ye daughters of calamity!” she continued, as with careful haste she groped her way towards the spot from whence issued the light, for afflictions are blessings in disguise! Had not my trembling hand dropped the lamp—had not its rays been extinguished—this cheering sight,” gazing through the crevice on the blue vault of Heaven, “had been withheld.”

A clear stream, bursting from the stony bosom of the rock, flowed murmuring through the cavern, and forced a passage through the base on the opposite side. The glare of day beaming from the cavity, reflected

reflected sufficient light for Rosalthe to trace its windings; and with renovated hope she beheld the opening to be sufficiently large to admit her. The roar of distant water reverberated on her ear; and as she attentively listened, she distinctly heard the Baltic's waves breaking on the pebbled shore. Convinced that the extremity of the cavern's subterraneous branchings was not far distant, she formed the resolution of following the dark mazes of the stream, and implicitly placing her reliance on the interposing hand of Providence. But her courage failed as she entered the hollow: cold, wet, comfortless, was the passage before her: she drew back, she shuddered with horror—she paused, with her hand pressed upon her forehead—she gazed wildly on the light of Heaven—her feeble pulse but slowly beat—her heart felt frozen in her bosom—but the image of Hildebrand arose to her view, and again her terrors vanished.

“What.

“What is death to dishonour?” she exclaimed, rushing into the opening; “what fear is half so terrible as the return of the Bandit?”

The passage appeared gradually to contract as she advanced, and her fragile form bent from its lowness; but still the stream swiftly glided, and the louder roar of the ocean each moment fanned the light hopes of her bosom, by picturing the nearly surmounted barrier of her difficulties. Often did her hand press the soft extumescences growing from the sides of the rocks—often did she start, as the cold and slimy eel slipped through her fingers—and her delicate arms were lacerated by the jutting points, which ever and anon threatened to obstruct her passage..

At length the face of day glared through the extremity of the cavern—the glorious sunbeams sported on the feathered waves of
of

of the Baltic—and the little stream, the friendly guide to liberty, rolled swiftly down the declivity of the rock. Rosalthe reached the aperture, but ere she emerged from the deep hollow of the cliff, the passing breeze wafted the sound of voices. She retreated hastily, and while she carefully concealed herself, Hildebrand and part of his troop paused on the margin of the stream. Rosalthe, trembling with fear, shrunk farther into the cavern.

“ ’Twas a glorious achievement !” exclaimed the Bandit, “ worthy to be performed on such a day.”

“ It was thy presence alone, my noble chief, which turned the scale of victory,” replied Otho ; “ for ’twas a desperate moment when I rushed to the cavern.”

Rosalthe’s heart heaved with agony.

“ Avaunt with past difficulties !” interrupted.

rupted Cuthbert; "let imagination forestal the joys which are to come, for the smile of beauty is the hero's meed."

"Right," said Hildebrand; "but now, my friends, let us to the forest; let us there await the promised treasure; for a long, long hour must pass, ere on the wings of love I can rejoin my bride."

"Leave it to us," replied Otho; "go thou to the cavern, and comfort the deserted Rosalthe. I warrant we give a good account of the embassy."

"No," returned the Bandit, "the honour and the danger we will share together; and when, loaded with our spoils, we return to our retreat, welcome love and Rosalthe!"

Long was it ere Rosalthe ventured from her hiding-place; and when at length she approached the aperture, like a poor frightened deer, long chased by the hunters, she trembled at the fall of a leaf, and every trifling sound filled her with dismay.

Convinced

Convinced that the banditti ere now must have reached the forest, and certain that the walls of St. Florenzia could alone afford her an asylum, she passed swiftly down the side of the rock. She knew that in another hour her escape would be discovered, and every impending moment would hang big with threatened danger. She looked anxiously around; and the first object which met her eye was her favourite seat, and a little above, the romantic hermitage of Father Anselmo. She paused not; and with the tears still streaming down her cheeks, ran, or rather flew, towards the cottage.

Soon she beheld the retreat of innocence, the dwelling of her infancy. Dusseldorf was standing mournfully at the door, his thoughts absorbed by the loss of his beloved child. Rosalthe spoke not; her feelings were too acute for utterance; she rushed through the garden gate; and panting, struggling, threw herself fainting on his bosom.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

“COME, dame! come Agatha! haste, run, fly! our child, our darling Rosalthe is restored to us!” exclaimed the astonished Dusseldorf, clasping the fainting form of Rosalthe to his heart, and conveying her into the cottage. “Holy Mary! how pale, how cold, how altered! here has been some dark transaction, some deep-laid villainy. If I could meet the being who has injured thee, Rosalthe,” and his eyes darted fire, “neither rank or fortune should shield him from my vengeance.”

“Who values the vengeance of a poor infirm old man?” sobbed Agatha, placing
aside

aside the ringlets, and chafing the temples of her adopted child: "if thou was rich, Dusseldorf, thou mightest talk of vengeance; but thy poverty precludes the succour of the law, and thy infirmities the resource of the sword."

"Thou art mistaken, Agatha," replied Dusseldorf; "the law is open to every honest man; 'twas made for the beggar as well as the prince; for, thank Heaven! we live in a country where the great cannot transgress with impunity. But see, the crimson tide of life reanimates the cheeks of our child: her pulse feebly returns—she revives—she will live again to bless us."

Rosalthe now opened her eyes, and gazing fearfully around the cottage, with a start of terror threw her arms round the neck of Dusseldorf, and hid her face on his bosom.

"Oh, my father! take me from hence,"
she

she exclaimed; "if thou lovest me—if thou valuest my life—if thou valuest my happiness—take me instantly to a place of safety."

"What means my child?" enquired the alarmed Dusseldorf, who began to tremble for the sanity of her mind; "look around, knowest thou not this cottage? Peace smiles upon it, and safety dwells within its walls."

"Not for me—not for me," repeated the nearly-distracted Rosalthe; "this dear, this beloved dwelling can no longer yield me a sanctuary. Torn from all I love, from all my fondest hopes had pictured, I am doomed to drag out the remainder of my days a wretched self-devoted prisoner."

"Heaven forbid!" sobbed Agatha.

"Ah! even now I hear them," shrieked Rosalthe, sinking on the floor, and clasping the knees of her foster-father; "save me from violence, from death, from pollution. Hark! that noise—now—now they
are

are at the door; the ruffians will not heed our cries, our supplications. They will tear me from you, my parents—they will drag me to the arms of my"—husband, she would have said, but her head turned dizzy, her eyes closed, and again the remembrance of sorrow was lost in insensibility.

"It was only Ulrica that you heard," said the dame, as Rosalthe again revived; "there is no living soul save ourselves in the cottage; why then art thou thus agitated? Time has been, Rosalthe, when thou hast laid down with security beneath this roof; still have we the same fastenings—still are we guarded by the same Providence; where then is the threatened danger? where the dreaded enemy?"

Rosalthe answered not: she remembered the oath which in the cavern Wilhelm had administered; and though self-preservation urged her to quit the cottage, still conscience, and a fear of violating the delicacy

cecy of honour, forbade her to name the Bandit, or betray the secret of his retreat.

“ Say, my beloved child,” pursued the dame, kissing the pale cheek of Rosalthe, “ why this agitation? why this fear? Rest until to-morrow, and then every terror will have ceased to wound. Secure in the gratification of thy heart’s tenderest wishes, thy prospects will be unclouded, and rich scenes of future happiness will alone be thine.”

“ Father,” said Rosalthe, breaking from the enfolding arms of Agatha, and gazing wildly in the face of Dusseldorf, “ if to thee my peace, my honour is dear, take me to St. Florensia; wait but another hour, and I am lost—wait but another hour, and an armed gang, bursting the door of the cottage, will tear me shrieking from thy arms.”

“ Through my heart they shall take thee then, Rosalthe,” said Dusseldorf; “ but fear them not; ere they can arrive, thou wilt

wilt have another defender—young, brave, ardent, but not more dearly interested in thy happiness than myself. Sit thee down, love; Ulrica shall run to the castle, and proclaim the joyful news of thy return, and then we shall see who first will reach the cottage—herself or the Count.”

A hectic blush tinged the cheeks of Rosalthe, and for a moment irradiated her countenance with delight; but soon the lily regained its empire—soon despair chased the transient emanation, and darted its gloomy horrors from her eyes.

“ I must go,” she exclaimed, in the wild tones of distraction, and hastening towards the door; “ talk not of the Count—thou knowest not the anguish which consumes my heart. Ah, holy and prophetic Power!” raising her streaming eyes to Heaven, “ never—never—never ought I to behold him more. Yet, ere I go—ere I renounce the world for ever—ere I struggle with the weight

weight of woe, and tear from my soul the feelings of humanity, let me follow the dictates of compassion—let me follow the dictates of love. Tell the Count de Lunenberg, that destiny, cruel and implacable, has destroyed the glowing picture of our hopes!—tell him the vows breathed at St. Florensia's altar are annulled!—tell him an insuperable, a horrid bar is placed between us, which art, nor power, strength, nor riches, can dissolve!—tell him,” and sighs swelled her bosom, “to alienate his heart from Rosalthe—to think of her as of one whom the grave has swallowed, as of one whom the world has lost!”

“All-gracious Providence!” ejaculated Dusseldorf, gazing fearfully on Rosalthe.

“Tell him,” she resumed, regardless of the sorrow of her foster-parents, “that beneath a cloister's gloom I will conceal my woe—that my broken, contrite spirit shall breathe its cares to Heaven, shall smother the murmurs of a bursting heart!—yet tell him, that that heart is alone impressed

with his image—that time can never efface it—that love is the source of my present misery—that through life the delusion will continue—that in death his loved name will be the last faltering accent of my lips, will catch the trembling sigh as it wafts to Heaven! And now, farewell, blessed retreat of my infancy! blessed dwelling of repose! Farewell every scene endeared by gratitude and affection! Never more will this roof shelter me from the tempest's fury, or the night's cold damps! never will my aching head, my palpitating heart, here find a resting-place! Farewell for ever!”

She gazed for a moment around the chamber; she folded her arms in the attitude of devotion; and then, with a sob of anguish, darted from the cottage. Dusseldorf overtook her at the garden gate—“Whither art thou hastening, Rosalthe?” he enquired. “Alas! methought thy return would have brought peace to my heart; but strangely is my child altered.
Say,

Say, what may this terror, this fearful change, portend? Look upon the affliction of thy long acknowledged parents, and withhold not thy confidence."

Rosalthe gazed earnestly in the face of Dusseldorf: she threw her arms around his neck; she kissed his furrowed cheek.

"Reproach me not, my father," she exclaimed; "there wants but that to complete the work—to turn my poor disordered brain. Much have I endured since the tremendous hour of my disappearance—but I am innocent; Heaven has preserved me from violence, has opened for me a passage to escape. Had I staid another night—madness is in the reflection—I cannot sustain it. Know that my lips are sealed—that I dare not breathe the tale of my wrongs—that a solemn oath has been administered—know that I have sworn by the Power who made me—know that I have sworn by the mighty Creator of hea-

ven and earth, never to divulge the name of my betrayer, or the mysterious secret of his retreat. And now, my father, let us to the convent—let us no longer linger: in the impressive rites of religion, in the eternal seclusion of its votaries, I shall find safety, I shall seek for peace.”

She eagerly pressed forward, and paused not until she had gained the summit of the hill. She turned for the last time to gaze on the expanded prospect endeared to her soul by memory and misfortune; she clasped her hands in an agony of sorrow, and tears flowed unheeded down her cheeks.

“Often, in the happy hours of childhood,” she exclaimed, as her eyes rested on the cypress, waving over the ruins of the chapel, “seated beneath thy shade, have I weaved into chaplets the new-blown flowers my little hands had gathered, and delighted with the execution, returned to
the

the cottage, to claim the meed of praise from the lips of my supposed mother—often there have I hung around thy neck,” she continued, pressing the hand of the good old soldier, “like a child to the best of fathers; whilst thou, full of tenderness, would listen to my prattle, and snatch the lisping sentences with eager kisses. Moments of peace!—moments of unmingled bliss!—moments short and transient!—painful, dear, in the retrospection! never, never to be obliterated—never, never to return! And there,” she pursued, still gazing on the chapel with an aching kind of fondness, “at the foot of the defaced altar, sacred as in the hours of its prosperity, have I listened, oh Adelbert! to thy vows of affection—have I stifled the suggestions of my heart, and resisted thy supplications. Often there have the tears of joy rolled down my cheeks—often there has love awakened into rapture! But it is passed—duty, firm and impressive, must extinguish the lambent flame. The dream must no

longer be cherished—affection must plead no more.”

She reached the convent gate; she raised her hand to the bell; again she turned, and again her eyes sought the chapel. The gate was thrown open; she rushed through it, nor paused till entering the cloisters, she fell senseless at the feet of the Abbess.

“Holy Virgin!” exclaimed the superior, raising her tenderly in her arms; “my child! my Rosalthe! Art thou returned to my affection? art thou returned to my care?”

By the assistance of the nuns, Rosalthe was conveyed to her chamber, where, for upwards of an hour, she relapsed from one fainting fit into another, till life and sorrow appeared almost extinguished. Dusseldorf, in the parlour, awaited the attendance of the Lady Abbess; and not until he had heard that his beloved child was more composed,

composed, did he quit the convent. Attributing the violence of her agitation to the difficulties and dangers she had encountered, he flattered himself that a night of calm repose, passed beneath the hallowed and protecting roof of St. Florensia, would entirely dissipate the horrors of her imagination, and soothe her harassed spirits into peace. The wild and pathetic sentences she had uttered—the hurried and distracted expression of her features, were traced from the same source; and as he pursued his path, Fancy, warm and fallacious, pictured a speedy and joyful conclusion to all his troubles. He remembered the promise of the Baron, while yet Rosalthe's fate was involved in mystery: now every doubt had vanished, and his affectionate heart hailed her the Countess de Lunenberg.

“Who would have thought,” he exclaimed, as he gazed on the distant towers of the castle, “that my poor cottage would
K 4 have

have sheltered the future lady of yon domain!—who would have thought that my arms would have supported her, that she would have called me father! Strange, wonderful occurrence! Ah, little did thy poor mother foresee, Rosalthe, when in death's expiring agonies she implored for thee our protection—little did she foresee the future honours and fortune of her orphan! What raptures shall we feel in our darling's elevation—what joys shall we experience in her happiness! In the long nights of winter we shall talk over her infant rambles—in the long days of summer we shall enumerate her virtues."

Dusseldorf had now passed the cottage. He felt not the infirmities of age—he felt light as the gossamer—for content dwelt in his mind, and hope in his heart. He hastened towards the castle—he longed to announce the return of Rosalthe, to cheer the drooping spirits of the dejected Adelbert; and not till he reached the castle-gate—

gate—not till panting he paused to recover breath, did he remember that the days of his youth were fled.

“ Well done, Dusseldorf !” he exclaimed, smiling at the vigorous achievement ; “ most folks in this world grow old, but methinks thou growest young ; for not fifty years ago, when the pretty Agatha lived with her mother, couldst thou have gone the distance in less time.”

He passed through the hall—he entered the presence of the Baron.

“ What news, my friend ?” enquired Adelbert, reading joyous importance in his countenance.

“ Oh, such news, my Lord ! such happy, happy news !”

“ Speak !” said the Baron ; “ inform us of what thou art the harbinger ?”

“ Rosalthe is returned,” interrupted Adelbert, springing from his chair ; “ is it

not true, Dusseldorf?" grasping the arm of the exulting veteran; "say, is she not at the cottage?"

"Indeed, she is not, my Lord—nay, do not look sad—give me time, and thou shalt know all—Rosalthe is in safety."

"All-gracious Heaven, I thank thee!" exclaimed Adelbert, hastening towards the door.

"Whither art thou going, my son?" enquired the Baron.

"To the cottage—to Rosalthe; do not detain me, my father; for quick as thought I would be at her feet."

"And wouldst thou, my dear impetuous boy," resumed the anxious parent, "kill thyself, to give Rosalthe a proof of thy affection? wouldst thou, for a transient gratification, widow her in the moment of felicity, and plunge us all in despair? Remember your scarcely recovered illness."

"It is gone, it is past," eagerly exclaimed Adelbert; "Dusseldorf has administered a cordial worth a whole laboratory of physic."

sic. I never was better in my life ; I feel as though my full heart could expand, and cover the universe."

"Thy spirits and thy strength will not co-operate," observed the Baron ; "compose thyself, and hear reason."

"I thought, my Lord," said Dusseldorf, addressing the Count, "my intelligence would create a pleasure, a transport in thy mind, which those alone can experience, who from the depth of woe have felt the transition to bliss. Rest contented with the anticipated joys of to-morrow, for to-night thou canst not see Rosalthe."

Adelbert started..

"From some fearful confinement," resumed the veteran, "she has escaped ; for overcome with fatigue and apprehension, she fainted at the threshold of the cottage. In vain we attempted to soothe her: every sound filled her with alarm, every sighing of the breeze conjured up a host of enemies.

K 6

mies.

mies. She felt not secure until she had reached the convent of St. Florensia, where the efforts of reason, and the expostulations of the Lady Abbess, soon calmed her agony."

Adelbert felt not satisfied at the relation; he wished immediately to repair to the convent, to soothe the anguish of Rosalthe. He feared that terror alone could not have awakened such a war of passions in her breast—he feared, he knew not what—he remembered the handsome stranger, who at the rock had dared to pollute her with his gaze—he remembered the inference of Father Anselmo—and a thousand vague and tormenting ideas filled his imagination. Long did he combat the remonstrances of the Baron, the intreaties of Dusseldorf; and when at length he yielded to their wishes, he sunk upon the sofa with a melancholy dejection, which marked the sacrifice to which he had acceded.

"To-morrow,"

“To-morrow,” he exclaimed, as Dusseldorf arose to depart, “I will elucidate the mystery—I will visit Rosalthe—I will acquaint the Abbess with my father’s clemency, and receive from the sanctuary of religion my lovely trembling bride. Ah, Heaven! what thrilling transports, what extatic bliss, will diffuse itself through my enraptured soul, when tenderly smiling—when, blushing with graceful modesty, she gives me her hand, she acknowledges her love! Let those who would seize the rose without the thorn, enjoy an unmixed, a negative state of happiness; give me the mighty transition from despair to hope—give me my present feelings—give me in this world a foretaste of Heaven.”

“An hour ago wouldst thou have said so?” enquired the Baron, smiling at the enthusiasm of his son.

“Sentiments change with circumstances,” replied the Count.

“Grant,” said Dusseldorf, with unusual earnestness,

earnestness, "that *circumstances* may not again change *sentiments*."

Adelbert perceived not the emphasis with which these words were uttered; but the Baron looked eagerly towards the veteran.

"How long are the hours of anticipation!" resumed the Count; "how often, before to-morrow's dawn, shall I retrace in idea the path to the convent!"

He sighed, and cast a reproachful glance at his father.

"By then I trust all will be well," said Dusseldorf; "for this day, the spirits of Rosalthe, too long tried and nearly exhausted, could not bear the interview."

"May guardian angels hover round her pillow!" sighed Adelbert; "*may balmy sleep, nature's soft nurse, weigh down her eyelids,*"

eyelids, and restore her to health and to me !”

Agatha, at the window of the cottage, watched the return of her husband ; and when she saw his approach, hastened to the door to meet him. She anxiously attended to his recital, and frequently interrupted him with eager enquiries.

“ Ah, I know we shall all be happy,” she exclaimed, seating herself by the fire ; “ Rosalthe will soon be a great lady ; and then we may defy the power of her enemies. I knew how it would end—I knew the last dance in my life would be at her wedding. Well, may the Virgin bless them both !” wiping a tear from her eye ; “ yesterday I wept for sorrow—to-day I weep for joy.”

“ Such is the mutability of life !” remarked Dusseldorf ; “ wonderful are its revolutions and changes : those who are now elevated at the top of Fortune’s wheel

know not how soon they may be hurled to the bottom ; while others, labouring beneath the pressure of adversity, from its revolving motion, may soon smile with gladness and content. She is a fickle gipsy, and often deceives her strictest votaries. But alas ! these considerations will not check the wild career of ambition—will not soothe contending nations into peace.”

“ Whilst those who quietly rest on the axis—” said the dame.

“ Should be satisfied,” interrupted Dusseldorf, “ and grateful. They should bear in remembrance Time’s rapid flight—they should never defer until to-morrow what to-day may perform ; and by the practice of every good work, guard against the too frequent, but vain and painful, wish of recalling past fleeting hours, of feeling remorse as useless as it is destructive.”

As the evening closed, or rather as the twilight expiring yielded to the gloomy expanse of darkness, Dusseldorf and Agatha

tha encircled the cheerful fire, and talked over the momentous preparations necessary for the expected wedding.

“ Indeed, Dusseldorf,” said Agatha, “ it should be very public. If I have my way, every maid in the hamlet shall dance there.”

“ If you have your way,” answered her husband drily, “ you will not lose a bit of consequence—you will lead the matrons, I warrant.”

“ Mercy save us ! there is a knock at the door !” exclaimed the dame ; “ now we shall see who’s right. I say ’tis the Count. Love sends many to the grave, and snatches many from its brink. Come, Rosalthe is the best physician after all—she has cured the fever.”

“ Peace !” said Dusseldorf, as he opened the door.

“ Attracted by the cheerful light beaming from the window of this dwelling,” said an unknown voice, “ a benighted traveller implodes

implores from thy humanity a few hours rest."

"Enter and welcome," replied the veteran, "for never was this door closed against the way-worn stranger."

"I thought it was the Count," said Agatha, as she first caught a glimpse of the stranger's handsome features; "I knew he would not rest a night without seeing Rosalthe."

"Hush!" replied Dusseldorf, in a low voice, and raising his hand as a signal for silence; "you are mistaken."

"Holy Virgin! and so I am," exclaimed the dame, as the stranger threw off his roquelo. "Hast thou travelled far, or art thou fearful of banditti?" she enquired, as her eyes rested on the huge broad-sword impending from his waist.

"My expedition is a novel one," replied the stranger, breathing a deep sigh, and casting his eyes with a scrutinizing gaze round the chamber; "I am in search
of

of a fugitive wife, upon whom I doat with distracting fondness."

"She must be little deserving of thy affection," observed the dame.

Dusseldorf spoke not, but with suspicious attention eyed the stranger.

"True," resumed the traveller; "but Love, the master-passion of the soul, the scoffer of reason, will not be resisted. It subdues the rage of enmity—it renders the coward brave—it melts the most obdurate heart—it civilizes the breast of the savage—it softens dispositions the most fierce, the most tyrannic—it compels the conqueror to sue for favour. Such is the ordination of nature, such the resistless power of love. It has brought me, stubborn and rugged as the forest's oak, to stoop to stratagem—to come disguised to this cottage, in search of my wedded bride, my captive, and—thy daughter."

Dusseldorf

Dusseldorf started from his chair, Agatha uttered a shriek of terror.

“Nay, do not tremble,” pursued the Bandit, “I would not injure ye—I would respect thy age, though ye were not the parents of Rosalthe. But I cannot yield my bride; for this morning sanctified my love.”

“Lost, lost Rosalthe!” sobbed the dame.
“Oh, blessed Virgin, guard her!”

“Wilt thou restore Rosalthe to my arms?” sternly enquired the Bandit.

“No, never,” firmly replied Dusseldorf and Agatha at the same moment.

“Then, my old dame,” said Hildebrand, shrilly whistling, “all the saints in heaven cannot aid thee.”

Instantly a loud crash succeeded. The door of the cottage was burst open, and part of the troop rushed into the chamber. Agatha, flying for succour to her husband, threw her arms around his neck, and hid her face on his bosom.

“Search

“Search well the cottage,” said the Bandit, addressing Cuthbert; “find Rosalthe, but respect her terror—respect her as the wife of thy chief.”

Cuthbert quitted the apartment, and in a few moments a piercing shriek succeeded.

“By the pangs which tear me,” exclaimed the Bandit, rushing from the chamber, “thy heart’s blood, Cuthbert, shall expiate the tears of Rosalthe.”

“Poor Ulrica!” whispered the dame, clinging closer to the undaunted Dusseldorf.

Like the famished tiger despoiled of his prey—like the fierce lioness bereaved of her young—the Bandit again entered the apartment, his eyes darting fury, his looks denouncing vengeance.

“Where is Rosalthe?” he demanded, in a voice of thunder.

Dusseldorf

Dusseldorf answered not.

“ Speak! tell me where thou hast hid her,” resumed Hildebrand, unsheathing his sword, “ or torture shall draw it from thee.”

The reflection of the bright blade darted across the features of Agatha. Already in idea did she see it pierce the heart of her husband; and breathing the most piteous lamentations, she sunk at the feet of the Bandit.

“ Ah, noble commander, wreak thy vengeance on me!” she exclaimed; “ spare but my husband, and I will tell thee all.”

“ Agatha!” said Dusseldorf, in a harsher voice than ever he had before addressed her.

Agatha looked earfully towards him, and wept.

“ Heed

“Heed him not,” rejoined the Bandit; “remember that upon thy word hangs his life.”

“Agatha!” again exclaimed Dusseldorf, “betray not your trust: remember that death with honour is preferable to life with disgrace.”

Instantly the point of the sword was directed at the breast of the veteran. He faltered not; but Agatha, shrieking, in the horror of her soul grasped the arm of the Bandit.

“Rosalthe,” she tremblingly articulated, “is—is—is——”

“In safety,” interrupted Dusseldorf.

“In safety,” faintly repeated the dame.

“Woman,” vociferated the enraged Bandit, “do not prevaricate; wait another moment, and death will snatch from thee the power to save.”

“I can bear it no longer,” sobbed Agatha;

tha; “do not frown—do not look so angry at me, my dear husband. Rosalthe,” and her lips trembled, and her hand pressed upon her beating heart, “unconscious of her parents’ sorrow, now rests in safety at the convent of St. Florensia.”

The sword dropped from the nerveless arm of the Bandit; he struck his clenched fist upon his forehead; he imprecated the most profane curses upon the monastery, the Abbess, the sisterhood—upon his own temerity in losing sight of his bride—upon the whole world; and swift as a falling meteor, followed by his myrmidons, rushed from the cottage.

Long was it ere Agatha ventured to look round the chamber—long was it ere, in faltering accents, she ventured to address her husband.

“Is he gone?” she faintly enquired;
“thinkest

"thinkest thou we are safe? Oh, blessed Mary! I never was so frightened in my life—my heart trembles within me."

"You should not have named the convent of St. Florensia," said Dusseldorf, mournfully; "I fear treachery may accomplish what force cannot attain."

"Alas! how could I help it?" sighed the dame; "for if my very soul had hung depending on it, I could not have seen thee killed."

"It speaks your affection, my poor dear Agatha," resumed Dusseldorf; "yet for the sake of our unfortunate Rosalthe, I could have wished it had been otherwise."

"I have no fears for our beloved child," replied the dame; "she rests in security under the all-protecting care of Providence: and for the wretch who dares to call her bride," lowering her voice, and looking anxiously round the chamber, "Heaven's thunder will strike his blasphemous head—will crush him in the pursuit of his iniquity."

Another hour passed in conversation. The door was then carefully secured ; and even then, though the dame and Ulrica were convinced that the banditti had quitted the cottage, it was long ere Dusseldorf could prevail upon them to retire to rest, and longer still ere terror yielded to repose.

CHAP. IX.

LONG was the night to Rosalthe—her labouring heart sickened with the weight of woe, and sleep visited not her eyelids; she shuddered at the dreadful images of past danger, and frequently started erect in her bed, to be convinced that she was indeed in safety. Towards the dawn of day she sunk into slumber; but even then the horrid scene of her marriage haunted her imagination; and when in the morning she awakened, her pillow was wet with the tears she had shed, and her faltering lips articulated, the *Bandit's Bride*.

She arose more composed, and, repairing to the chapel, knelt on the grave of her mother, and there breathed forth the most ardent thanksgiving to Heaven for her safe and unexpected deliverance.

“My child,” said the lady abbess, as she met her returning from her devotions, “a friend awaits thee in the parlour—a friend, whose ardent and insinuating reasoning will in an instant overthrow the new-raised fabric of thy ideas, and fill alone the space. Why dost thou tremble? Why dost thou look so mournfully towards me? Is there aught in the name of friend so terrifying? Answer me, Rosalthe, for thy cheek is pale, and thy eyes wildly wander round the apartment.”

“If, as my heart forebodes, it is the Count,” falteringly articulated Rosalthe, “I must not see him: nay, start not, holy mother, I dare not—the vengeance of Heaven would be denounced against me. My fate is fixed—the veil shall screen my wretchedness,

wretchedness, and sanctify my vows—I will become a sister of St. Florensia—soon in the pious office will the throbs of anguish cease—soon will my agonized bosom be restored to quiet. Yet is my heart unchanged, for there does his image rest—there so deeply is it engraven, that by death it can alone be effaced.”

“Inexplicable, mysterious girl!” said the abbess, “what answer am I to return to the Count’s supplications?”

“Tell him in this world we must never meet—tell him,” continued Rosalthe, “I am born to suffer—tell him I cannot breathe the torturing word, farewell. Yet stay,” she resumed, after a painful pause. “Holy mother, pity my weakness! Ah, Heaven, what have I articulated! what fearful horrid words have I pronounced! Must I never see thee more, Adelbert? Has thy Rosalthe passed the decree? Surely the prayers of years will atone for the trespass of five short minutes. I must go—I must soften thy unbending spirit—I must calm thy

impetuous soul. Perhaps with less regret thou wilt yield to Fate's stern mandate—perhaps thou wilt renounce thy Rosalthe—will learn submission from her example.”

She reached the door—she tottered—she leant against the wall.

“Alas!” she continued, “how can I bear the interview? how can I support the conflict? Assist me, blessed Mary, in the arduous undertaking! Shield me from yielding to the dangerous sophistry of love! Guide me in the unerring track of thy wisdom!”

She hastened through the passage—she reached the parlour—breathless with emotion her hand grasped the lock—her head throbbed with the labouring pulse of agony—she stood irresolute, but she forgot that her sighs, or rather sobs, reached the interior of the apartment—reached the ear of her lover. Impatient of delay, and
eager

eager to acquaint Rosalthe with the unexpected change in the Baron's sentiments, Adelbert awaited her appearance. He thought to see her smiling—he thought to see her happy. He heard the sound of sorrow—he threw open the door, not with the expectation of welcoming Rosalthe, but to comfort an afflicted being. He started back—"Father of Heaven!" he ejaculated, "my affianced bride! my love! my Rosalthe! is it thus we meet?"

She answered not—she stood in silent woe—her hands clasped, and her eyes fixed on the pale and agitated countenance of Adelbert.

"I am come," at length articulated the Count, "to wipe the tears of sorrow from thy eyes, Rosalthe—to claim thy vows—to tell thee that my father eagerly, anxiously sues thee for his daughter. What! still art thou silent? still dost thou weep? All-gracious Providence, what am I to presage?"

Alas, the damp of grief steals over my thoughts! Say, my Rosalthe, what is the dire prognostic?"

He took her hand, he would have raised it to his lips, but shuddering she withdrew it.

"Forget me, my Lord," she faintly murmured—"forget our love—forget the past blessed hours of happiness—drive me from thy heart, from thy remembrance. Fate has placed an impenetrable bar to our union, and Heaven has sanctioned the sacrifice."

"Rosalthe," exclaimed Adelbert, with a start of agony, "recall those words, or I am lost."

"Ah, would it was possible!" she sobbed, raising her tearful eyes.

"*Heaven has sanctioned the sacrifice—fate has placed an impenetrable bar to our union,*" repeated the nearly distracted Adelbert; "explain thy words, for sorrow too
sure

sure has maddened thy brain. Fixed in amazement, like one blasted by the thunderbolt of Heaven, I stand in trembling expectation of their awful import."

"Oh spare me! spare me the confession!" implored Rosalthe—"let imagination picture all that thou canst dread, and let thy heart believe it."

"Ah, then I have lost thy love—I am become an object of indifference," exclaimed the agonized Adelbert.

"No," faintly articulated Rosalthe, softened by the anguish of her lover; "if the secrets of my breaking heart could be laid open to thy inspection, thou wouldst not upbraid—thou wouldst pity me. I am——"

"Say? What?" interrupted Adelbert.

"Married," groaned Rosalthe, hiding her burning cheek upon her bosom.

Adelbert spoke not—panting, breathless, stiffened, yet alive, he supported himself against the wall, pale as the monumental marble.

“At length,” sighed Rosalthe, after a long long pause, “my severest task is performed.”

“Married!” articulated the livid lips of Adelbert.

Rosalthe looked towards him—her tears fell—her heart softened within her.—“I must away,” she exclaimed, with momentary courage—“Virtue, cold and relentless, demands the sacrifice. I must tear thy dear, dear image from my soul; and in its stead impress it with the view of Heaven. Farewell!” hastening towards the door—“Adelbert, forget me.”

“We part not thus,” exclaimed the Count, eagerly seizing her hands. “Married!—Cruel, barbarous Rosalthe!”

“Reproach me not,” said Rosalthe—“breathe not such piercing sounds—look not so angry—frown not upon me. Oh, Adelbert, the blood freezes around my heart—my limbs tremble—sensation, breath, life, yields to thy displeasure. Fate inter-

cepts our hopes—fate blights our prospects; but by our former love——”

“Talk not of love, thou never felt its force,” interrupted Adelbert—“thou hast smiled—thou hast led me on to my undoing—thou hast deceived me with imaginary bliss—thou hast deluded me with fancied happiness. Oh woman, woman! false, deceitful sex! laden with death, thou temptest us to destruction: But for thee innocence had reigned—but for thee sorrow had never wounded. Married!—Oh blasting sound!—Married!—Away, Rosalthe, lest I commit a deed should make earth, sea, and heaven tremble!—Married! fly—haste to thy husband! Let us part, I cannot bear thy presence. Yet stay and mark me—hide him from the glare of day, for if I see thee smile upon him, if I see thee hang resting on his bosom, by the sacred light of heaven my sword shall make thee widowed. Oh my distracted brain! Rosalthe married!—Why dost thou tremble? tears become not a bride.—Go, false

one, perdition lurks beneath thy mask of matchless beauty, and poison more deadly than the envenomed adder hangs around thee. Ah! what has my rashness done? How pale, how cold!—Revive, Rosalthe, loveliest of thy sex—look on thy self-convicted murderer.”

In the madness of despair he folded her fainting form to his bosom—he knelt—he kissed away the burning tears which fell from his eyes on her cheek—he called her his affianced bride, his injured, suffering, beloved Rosalthe—he besought her to pardon his impetuosity, to pardon the reproachful accents which had escaped him in the moment of distraction.—“Perish the wretch who has torn thee from me!” he continued, as a gentle sigh proclaimed returning animation.

Rosalthe struggled—she freed herself from his arms—she fixed her eyes in melancholy earnestness upon him—“Oh, Adelbert,

Adelbert, what hast thou done?" she exclaimed. "Was it generous to reproach an ill-fated being, whose love is her bane, whose very soul hangs upon thy smiles? Yet, alas, what am I saying? Leave me to my fate. Between us yawns destruction. Repose is fled—peace will never more return—for, ah God! I am married."

"Horrid, horrid sound!" repeated the almost frenzied Adelbert. "Yet tell me all, Rosalthe, tell me the woeful story; for even now, though thou art married, thy angel innocence beaming from thy eyes, the tender sorrow softening in thy bosom, proclaims that thou art wronged, and turns my heart to pity."

Rosalthe sunk weeping on a chair, while the Count, in wild expectancy, gazed on her agitated features.

"Yesterday," she articulated, in a voice broken by sobs, "ere the sun had reached the highest heaven, heedless of my shrieks,
my

my struggles, my lamentations, a monk, profaning the sacred tenets of his faith, proclaimed me the bride of——” She remembered her oath—she stopt—she shuddered.

“Who?” eagerly questioned the enraged Adelbert.

“I dare not say,” resumed Rosalthe: “there’s the mystery; for, sworn to silence, I have vowed, by the Being who made me, never to betray my persecutor, never to betray the secret of his retreat.”

“May Heaven bring the iniquity to light,” exclaimed Adelbert—“may the wretched perpetrator, relying for safety on a woman’s terror, never feel the healing balm of comfort, never enjoy the blessing of peace—may his nights pass in wakeful horrors, his days in remorse—may the last hour of his life be embittered by the groans of those he has injured—may he eternally feel the anguish by which at this moment I am racked.”

“Oh breathe not such bitter imprecations,”

tions," sobbed Rosalthe—"let us bow to the decrees of Providence—let us remember that virtue, fame, honour, demands the sacrifice. 'Tis the test of thy affection, Adelbert, for though I can suffer woe, trust me, I could not bear the breath of calumny. We must part."

"Harrowing sentence!" replied the Count; "yet must I approve it. Fairest, best of women, thou hast curbed every turbulent passion of my soul; Heaven shines upon thy countenance, virtue dwells within thee. I will at a distance revere thy purity—I will carry thy image in my heart—I will think upon thee in the hour of distraction, and thy example shall teach me fortitude—I will think upon thee in the repining hours of melancholy, and thy submission shall soothe me into peace."

"No more, in pity," sighed Rosalthe; "I dare not trust my heart; thy tears, thy sorrows, soften my resolves; and when I see thee thus, Adelbert, I cannot say farewell."

"Mayst

“Mayst thou ever see me thus, then, Rosalthe; for I could gaze till my wrapt soul, losing all its firmness, would cling so tightly to thee, that Heaven alone could loose it.”

“Farewell for ever,” sobbed Rosalthe, approaching the door, and turning her streaming eyes on Adelbert; “and if my life could bring thee comfort, gladly would I resign it.”

“Thou canst give me comfort,” exclaimed the Count, detaining her.

“With honour?” interrupted Rosalthe.

“Or else think not that I would ask it,” pursued Adelbert. “I love thee, Rosalthe—love studies the welfare of its object, not the gratification of its passions. Thou hast sworn never to reveal the secret of thy disappearance—preserve it inviolate; but promise me, my peace, my health, my life hang upon it, not to take the veil—not to become a sister of St. Florensia, while the possibility of our union remains, while hope leads me on to picture happiness.”

Rosalthe

Rosalthe hesitated for a moment, and then extending her hand and forcing a mournful smile—"Every wish consistent with duty," she replied, "I grant thee. Farewell, my Lord; and if to know that love, regret, and sorrow, proportionate to what thou feelest, rages in my heart, will bring thee peace, enjoy it."

She paused not for an answer, but, hastily withdrawing her hand from the Count, rushed out of the parlour. With the necessity for exertion expired the resolution of Rosalthe; for no sooner did she reach her own apartment, than exhausted, powerless, sobbing from the excessive anguish of her heart, she threw herself half-fainting on the bed. Long was it ere the stupor which had condensed her feelings yielded to a sense of her situation—long was it ere a salutary shower of tears dissipated the wild expression of despair.

"Ah, take me, Heaven!" she exclaimed,
wringing

wringing her hands, "the pangs of death are passed, and life has naught to wish for."

"Is it Rosalthe," exclaimed sister Josepha, who, entering at the moment, had overheard her request; "is it Rosalthe who would throw down the load of existence—who thoughtlessly murmurs at the decrees of Omnipotence—who would change the ordination of infinite wisdom? Say, inconsiderate sister in affliction, have I not warned thee of the fleeting joys of life? Have I not told thee to place thy dependance on things above, not on the short-lived glory of a summer's sky? Have I not told thee that thou was fair as the richest flower in the garden of beauty—that the blue lustre of the sapphire was outvied by the radiance of thy eyes—that the down of the peach hung upon thy cheek? Have I not told thee that the spoiler, Love, would nip the finished blossom, and blast the promised joys?"

Rosalthe-

Rosalthe sobbed.

“Yet art thou deluded?” continued the nun. “Oh, frail, unhappy sex! like the gay butterfly sporting in the sunbeams, thou displayest the fancied importance of thy charms, which in a little season fade and attract no more. Why, Rosalthe, didst thou wander from the convent? Why didst thou not remain in the retreat of innocence? The sigh would not here have swelled thy bosom—the tears would not here have stolen down thy cheek.”

“Treachery, not love,” articulated Rosalthe, “has destroyed my peace, has blighted my expectations.”

“Here it could not have reached thee,” rejoined Sister Josepha—“here thou mightest have rested in security—malice could not have penetrated these walls—calumny could not have blown its breath upon thee.”

“From neither of these sources do my afflictions spring,” replied Rosalthe.

“Then

“Then art thou comparatively happy,” interrupted the nun; “preserve unpolluted the fair temple of thy fame, and thou mayst defy the inroads of despair. What, still dost thou weep? If, like thee, I had ever trod the paths of virtue; if, like thee, I had never felt the goading thorn of self-reproach, I would bow without a murmur to my destined sorrows—would kiss the hand which chastened me.”

“’Tis a bitter lesson,” sighed Rosalthe, in a voice scarcely articulate from emotion.

“Poor child!” returned the sister. “Hear what I have resigned, and learn from me to suffer. I was once the tender treasure of my parents’ love—I was once guileless as the dove, Innocence’s smiling emblem. Rich in the gifts of beauty, I cheered the new-born day, and sported in the rays of prosperity. But, alas! short were the hours of peace—short were the hours of simplicity! Temptation spread itself before me, and my feet tottered. Love thawed the icicles of virtue, and persuasion plunged

plunged me into vice. I attended to the voice of adulation—I suffered the dictates of flattery to pour itself into my ear—it sunk deeper, it sunk into my heart, and turned to corrosive poison. Matchless were the lips which breathed it—matchless the form which stole my virgin heart. Decked in an angel's garb, a demon came to tempt me. My age was the age of inexperience. I followed the directions of my betrayer, and hid from the best, the most indulgent of parents, a knowledge of my fatal passion."

Rosalthe looked anxiously towards her.

"I fled from the dwelling of my infancy," continued the agitated nun—"I plunged my tender mother into sorrow—I covered my aged father with disgrace."

Rosalthe started, and, grasping Sister Josepha's hand, gazed intently on her varying features. "Who art thou?" she exclaimed.

exclaimed. "Tell me thy name? for if memory mocks me not, often have I listened to thy story."

"Then hast thou heard me cursed?" articulated the trembling nun.

"No, never, never," replied the astonished Rosalthe; "blessings great and innumerable have followed the drooping penitent, have attended the path of the magdalen."

"Holy and blessed Virgin!" exclaimed Sister Josepha, bursting into tears.

"Leave me not in doubt," resumed Rosalthe—"tell me thy name—at once confirm or crush the quick revolving hopes of fancy."

"Do not hate me," murmured the agitated nun, throwing her arms around the neck of Rosalthe, and hiding her conscience-stricken face upon her bosom, "I am the wretched Jacquilina—the ungrateful guilty daughter of the virtuous Dusseldorf and Agatha."

Rosalthe uttered an exclamation of joy.

"Happy,

“Happy, happy parents!” she faintly ejaculated, kissing the pale cheek of the *religieux*, “their prayers are heard, their wishes are gratified! Jacquilina, shuddering at the enormities of vice, bends at the shrine of virtue, a lowly suppliant for returning grace. Alas! why hast thou thus long hid thyself from their affection? Why hast thou left them ignorant of thy fate? In sorrow have they breathed thy name—in anguish have they told thy story. Often, as the tears of parental anxiety have moistened the cheek of thy excellent father, has he gazed upon the convent of St. Florensia, and wished that it had contained his child.”

“All great, all prophetic Heaven!” ejaculated the nun.

“But now,” continued Rosalthe, “content and peace, my more than parents, may be thine: not one, but two children will these walls contain.”

“Ah, my parents! my dear, my tender, long deserted parents!” sighed Sister Josepha,

sepha, "upon whom memory has dwelt with anguish—upon whom my heart has often called—again shall I receive their blessing, again shall I partake of their affection. Oh, in the moment I forsook them—when with a beating heart I visited the ruined chapel—when I hung sobbing on the arm of my seducer, little did I foresee the years of penance I was storing up for myself—little did I foresee the rankling thorn, far keener than the bite of the asp, which the hand of infamy directed at my bosom. Ah God, short are the hours of pride! short are the hours of enjoyment! The voice of adulation soon lost its charms, flattery yielded to regret, regret to sorrow. The diamond lost its value in possession—the emerald, the ruby, interwoven with the flowing ringlets on my temples, no longer gave me pleasure—my eyes rested on the gilded dome, on the painted ceilings of my dwelling, and my heart sighed for my parents—my cottage—my innocence."

"Peace

“Peace may yet be thine,” said Rosalthe, mingling her tears with the desponding Jacquilina’s—“thy parents’ forgiveness will restore repose—the prayers of thy contrite heart will reach to Heaven, and recompence thy sorrows.”

“If I could elude the flight of time—if I could recall the hours of youthful simplicity,” replied the sister, “I might partake of peace. But, alas! the days of my maturity were passed in guilt, and memory can never slumber. Death awakened me from the trance, for the cold grave, closing on the shrouded form of a darling child, taught me the vanity of life, and humbled my heart to repentance. The tale of past affliction is too bitter to be now repeated,” she continued, as the tears of regret fell upon her bosom; “I will by prayer strive to subvert the throes of anguish, and, when I have succeeded, to thy compassion, Rosalthe, will I breathe the secret of my woe.”

“Yet,” eagerly implored Rosalthe, snatch-

ing the hand of the nun, who had already reached the door of the apartment, "may I not inform thy parents of the joyful intelligence? Say, sister, when next they visit the convent, may I not say—'Thy prayers, oh virtuous, excellent Dusseldorf, oh tender, compassionating Agatha, are heard. Thy sighs are wafted to the throne of grace—thy tears are registered in the book of mercy—Jacquilina lives—thy age's darling, thy once obedient child, is now beneath the sacred roof of St. Florensia, a humble contrite penitent.'"

Jacquilina sunk sobbing on the bosom of Rosalthe. "Ah no," she murmured, "hear first my story, and then tell me whether I may hope for pardon. Hear, Rosalthe, with what stoical apathy I quitted the retreat of my infancy, and fled for ever from my parents—hear how soon, beguiled from the path of virtue, I entered a thorny road, to which my steps were utter strangers—how soon I listened to the self-deceiving voice of flattery, and fell an easy yielding

yielding prey to man. Holy and merciful Heaven," raising her clasped hands, "obliterate from memory the fatal hour of my ruin! Let not my tortured fancy dwell upon it, lest, forgetful of my own guilt, forgetful of that pardon for which I supplicate, I impiously curse the being who plunged me into woe, and turn my piety into upbraidings, my penitence into despair."

Rosalthe would have soothed her, would have taught her to look for peace, would have mingled her tears with those of the heart-broken magdalen, but Jacquilina, perceiving her intention, withdrew her hand, and, turning hastily from her, hurried out of the chamber.

END OF VOL. III.



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